

The Internet and Daily Life

**Many Americans use the Internet in
everyday activities, but traditional offline
habits still dominate**

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Summary of Findings

The Internet is registering an initial impact on everyday life in America.

Nearly all Internet users go online to conduct some of their ordinary day-to-day activities, from mundane tasks to social arrangements to personal recreation. Furthermore, online Americans report their Internet use affects the proportions of these affairs in their everyday lives.

- 88% of online Americans say the Internet plays a role in their daily routines. Of those, one-third say it plays a major role, and two-thirds say it plays a minor role. The activities they identified as most significant are communicating with family and friends and finding a wealth of information at their fingertips.
- 64% of Internet users say their daily routines and activities would be affected if they could no longer use the Internet.
- 53% of Internet users say they do more of certain everyday activities simply because they can do them on the Internet. The most popular are communicating with family and friends and looking up information.

People both admire and use the Internet as a tool for conducting their everyday activities.

The vast majority of online Americans hold a high opinion of the Internet as a place to conduct the everyday tasks and pursue the everyday pleasures of life, such as checking the weather, doing their banking, communicating with friends and family, and playing games. Over the course of the four years in which the Pew Internet Project has been tracking online activities, a growing number of users have acted on their positive opinions of the Internet and gone online to do these things.

- 92% of Internet users say the Internet is a good place to go for **getting everyday information**.
- 85% say the Internet is a good way to **communicate or interact with others**.
- 75% say the Internet is a good place to **conduct everyday transactions**.
- 69% say the Internet is a good way to **entertain themselves** in everyday life.

This report is based on the findings of a daily tracking survey on Americans' use of the Internet. The results in this report are based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates between November 18 and December 14, 2003, among a sample of 2,013 adults, 18 and older. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 2 percentage points. For results based Internet users (n=1358), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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Summary of Findings

Throughout this report, we present percentages of “Internet users who do an activity online.” To be clear, we calculated these percentages based on only those Internet users for whom an activity is relevant. That is, we made our calculations based on the percentage of Internet users who undertake that activity *somehow* in their everyday lives – either offline or online, or both ways. For example, of all Internet users in this study, 53% of them check sport scores *somehow* in their everyday lives, while 47% of them never check sports scores. Therefore, when we then report that “55% of the Internet users check sports scores online.” we are referring to 55% of that subset of the 53% of Internet users who *ever, somehow in their everyday lives*, check sports scores.

Thus, we find that in the activities we have used to probe whether people **get information** for their everyday lives:

- 87% of Internet users who ever use maps or get driving directions do this online.
- 69% of Internet users who say they get weather reports get such reports online.
- 63% of Internet users who say they get news in their lives get news online.
- 55% of Internet users who ever check sports scores in their lives get such information online.
- 50% of Internet users who ever look up phone numbers, addresses or zip codes in their lives get such information online.

Similarly, we find that in the activities we have used to explore everyday interpersonal **communication**:

- 79% of Internet users who say they communicate with friends and family use the Internet for such communications.
- 52% of Internet users who exchange greetings, cards and invitations go online to do so.
- 46% of Internet users who say they ever plan gatherings and arrange personal meetings use the Internet for such purposes.
- 26% of Internet users who ever plan meetings with new people or dates use the Internet for those purposes.

At the same time, we find that in the activities we have used to explore commonplace **transactions**:

- 55% of the Internet users who buy tickets for movies, plays and sporting events do such activities online.
- 44% of the Internet users who say they do banking and bill paying use the Internet for those purposes.
- 33% of the Internet users who ever purchase everyday items go online to buy things such as books and groceries.

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- 22% of the Internet users who schedule appointments and meetings use the Internet for such purposes.

Finally, we find that in the activities we have used to explore the ways people **entertain themselves** in everyday life:

- 46% of the Internet users who ever play games do so online.
- 34% of the Internet users who say they have hobbies go online to pursue their hobbies.
- 23% of the Internet users who say they listen to music or radio regularly do so online.
- 18% of the Internet users who say they read for pleasure will read online.
- 16% of the Internet users who watch videos, movie previews, or cartoons do so online.

The integration of the Internet into everyday life doesn't match its popular appeal. Most Internet users still default to the traditional offline ways of communicating, transacting affairs, getting information, and entertaining themselves.

Two different measures suggest that, overall, the virtual world of the Internet still takes second place to the real world as the place to accomplish daily tasks or enjoy recreation. First, among the many Internet users who toggle between the offline and online worlds for activities, most use the “real world” alternative rather than the online alternative. For example, Internet users buy movie tickets more often at the box office than buy them online.

Second, when Internet users do a certain activity *exclusively* in one realm, more will still do it exclusively offline than exclusively online. For example, among Internet users who ever look for sports scores, almost twice as many will look for them exclusively offline as exclusively online. Of Internet users who ever look up addresses or phone numbers, many more will use phone books than online sources to get this information.

Below are examples showing how Internet users generally prefer the offline world to the online world even when they are comfortable doing things online:

- 45% of Internet users who ever **get the news** get it both online and offline. Of that group, 22% access news more often online; 71% get news more often offline from places like newspapers, radio and TV.
- 27% of Internet users who ever **purchase tickets** do so both online and offline. Of those 38% buy tickets more often online; 57% buy them more often by phone, mail, or in person.
- 26% of Internet users who ever **do banking or pay bills** do so both online and offline. Of those, 34% do it more often online; 54% do it more often in offline.

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The following percentages of Internet users who do a given activity will do it either exclusively offline or exclusively online:

- 17% of Internet users who ever **get the news**, get it online exclusively; 38% get it offline exclusively.
- 28% of Internet users who ever **purchase tickets**, do so online exclusively; 45% do it offline exclusively.
- 20% of Internet users who ever **do banking or pay bills** do so online exclusively; 56% do so offline exclusively.

From among the 18 different everyday activities we measured in this survey, there is a single exception to this pattern of preference for the offline world. Among Internet users who look for maps or driving directions, 56% do it exclusively online and 14% do it exclusively offline. Among the 39% who do it both ways, 48% say they do it more frequently online, and 40% say they do it more frequently offline. Otherwise, the story is that the offline world still is preferred to the online world for many activities related to daily living.

The responses of online Americans suggest that the Internet is a better tool for accomplishing some everyday activities than others. The Internet is most popular when its efficiency comes into play.

The emerging story of the Internet in daily life is the where and how of its use. The nature of our multi-channel world means we can communicate in many ways – by email, phone, letters, face-to-face meetings, and instant messages. And we can gather information from many sources – Web sites, books, newspapers, television, and radio. The pattern of responses in this survey is that people pick one channel or another depending on both the nature of the task and the circumstances of the moment.

Users turn to the Internet most when it offers advantages in speed, convenience, time, and other measures of efficiency. One of the most popular Internet activities, looking for maps and directions, collapses several tasks into one simple, elegant application. Anyone who has used the uncomplicated and effective application for finding driving directions online knows how superior it can be to the often clumsy and time-consuming experience of doing it offline.

Further, given that most Internet users are more mobile than their Internet connections are, a lot of daily activities still depend on where people are. For example, reading a story in the newspaper might be more convenient on the bus to work, while reading that same story online at a desktop computer might fill the need for a break during a busy workday.

Polling of everyday activities shows that the most popular ones share the characteristic of being efficiently done on the Web: getting maps or directions; communicating with others; checking the weather, news and sports scores; buying tickets.

A leading edge of Internet users – 30% of the online population – integrates the Internet into everyday life in a richer and more thorough way.

In past research, the Pew Internet & American Life Project often found a leading edge of Internet users who behave differently from the rest. Demographically, this group is often better educated, of higher income, and has spent more years online than other Internet users. In this report, such a group of users integrates the Internet into everyday life in a much more engaged and richer way than others. It is likely that they are blazing a trail that others will follow.

- 30% of Internet users say the Internet plays a major role in their everyday lives. Compared to other Internet users, they do more everyday activities online and they do them online more frequently, and they are more likely to do them exclusively online.

Different demographic groups of users integrate the Internet into everyday life differently.

- Men are more likely than women to use the Internet more for information gathering and entertainment.
- Women are more likely than men to use the Internet to communicate.
- Young people are more likely than older Americans to have a more positive attitude about the Internet, in particular thinking it is a good place to go for conducting transactions and for entertainment.
- Older people are more likely than younger Internet users go online to interact socially.

The Internet and Daily Life: Summary of Findings at a Glance
The Internet is registering an initial impact on everyday life in America.
People both admire and use the Internet as a tool for conducting their everyday activities.
The integration of the Internet into everyday life doesn't match its popular appeal. Most Internet users still default to the traditional offline ways of communicating, transacting affairs, getting information, and entertaining themselves.
The responses of online Americans suggest that the Internet is a better tool for accomplishing some everyday activities than others. The Internet is most popular when its efficiency comes into play.
A leading edge of Internet users – 30% of the online population -- integrates the Internet into everyday life in a richer and more thorough way.
Different demographic groups of users integrate the Internet into everyday life differently.
Source: Deborah Fallows. <i>The Internet and Daily Life: Many Americans use the Internet in everyday activities, but traditional offline habits still dominate</i> . Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project, August 2004

Summary of Findings

The tasks of everyday life and the Internet				
<i>Of those Internet Users who ever do a given activity in their lives, the percentages who do them online; and of those who do that activity at any point in their lives, the percentages who do them online exclusively, offline exclusively, or both online and offline.</i>				
Activity or task	Percent of Internet users who have done this online	Percent of those who do the activity who do it online only	Percent who do it offline only	Percent who do it offline and online (Broken down further into the percent of this group who do the task mostly online or mostly offline)
Commonplace information searches				
Look for a map or driving directions	87%	56%	14%	31% (48% of them do it mostly online and 40% do it mostly offline)
Check weather reports	69	31	31	39% (26% of them do it mostly online and 69% do it mostly offline)
Get news	63	17	38	45% (22% of them get it mostly online and 71% get it mostly offline)
Look up telephone numbers, addresses	50	19	50	31% (34% of them get it mostly online and 61% get it mostly offline)
Check sports scores	55	26	45	30% (32% of them get it mostly online and 61% get it mostly offline)
Commonplace transactions				
Buy tickets for concerts, movies	55	28	45	27% (38% of them do it mostly online and 57% do it mostly offline)
Pay bills, do banking	44	20	56	26% (34% of them do it mostly online and 54% do it mostly offline)
Purchase everyday items like books, groceries, CDs	33	9	68	19% (5% of them do it mostly online and 93% do it mostly offline)
Schedule appointments or meetings	22	9	78	13% (39% of them do it mostly online and 55% do it mostly offline)
Everyday kinds of communications				
Communicate with friends and family	79	21	20	59% (17% of them do it mostly online and 72% do it mostly offline)
Send greeting cards, invitations	52	17	47	36% (26% of them do it mostly online and 66% do it mostly offline)
Plan get-togethers for clubs or groups	46	20	53	26% (24% of them do it mostly online and 66% do it mostly offline)
Look for new people to meet or date	26	12	76	16% (18% of them do it mostly online and 60% do it mostly offline)
Everyday entertainment activities				
Play games	46	20	54	27% (33% of them do it mostly online and 60% do it mostly offline)
Pursue hobbies	34	10	66	25% (16% of them do it mostly online and 68% do it mostly offline)
Listen to music or radio	23	6	77	17% (10% of them do it mostly online and 84% do it mostly offline)
Read for pleasure	18	5	82	13% (24% of them do it mostly online and 68% do it mostly offline)
Watch videos, previews, cartoons	16	4	84	11% (9% of them do it mostly online and 87% do it mostly offline)

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November-December 2003 survey. N= 2,013 in full sample and 1,358 Internet users. Margin of error is ±3%.

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Methodology

Acknowledgements

Many of the comments about everyday Internet use were contributed in response to a query on our Web site, www.pewinternet.org. Additional comments came from three Web sites, whose managers were generous to let us post queries on their message boards. We appreciate the help from Beliefnet.org, WAHM.com (Work at Home Moms) and from Fatherville.com. We thank all those who took the time to think about our questions and to email us with their thoughts.

About the Pew Internet & American Life Project: The Pew Internet Project is a nonprofit, non-partisan think tank that explores the impact of the Internet on children, families, communities, the work place, schools, health care and civic/political life. The Project aims to be an authoritative source for timely information on the Internet's growth and societal impact. Support for the project is provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts. The project's Web site: www.pewinternet.org

About Princeton Survey Research Associates: PSRA conducted the survey that is covered in this report. It is an independent research company specializing in social and policy work. The firm designs, conducts, and analyzes surveys worldwide. Its expertise also includes qualitative research and content analysis. With offices in Princeton, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C., PSRA serves the needs of clients around the nation and the world. The firm can be reached at 911 Commons Way, Princeton, NJ 08540, by telephone at 609-924-9204, by fax at 609-924-7499, or by email at ResearchNJ@PSRA.com

Part 1.

Introduction

Nearly two-thirds of the American population is now online. Internet use continues to spread from work to home, and now to Americans' on-the-go lives. Increasing numbers access the Web via broadband connections. The storehouse of available and searchable content is ever-expanding, and Americans' collective appetite for it seems boundless.

In this report, we explore what this activity on the Internet means to the mundane moments of everyday life. By these moments, we mean the stuff of day-to-day living, from getting the news to buying movie tickets to paying bills to scheduling lunch.

The Pew Internet & American Life Project has done a great deal of research focused on the basics of what Americans do online. Our work shows, for example, that applications of email and search are the most popular activities and that transactions like banking are the fastest growing. But here, we want to get beyond the popularity contest sense of how many people do what online, to understand the texture of Internet use in everyday life.

Our question "How does the Internet integrate itself into daily life?" is posed in the context of vanguard academic research on the Internet that explores the role of the Internet in everyday life as "an emerging phenomenon, not a mature one."¹ That one question is really many small ones: Is the Internet becoming a fundamental player in people's daily lives? Is it changing what people do every day – perhaps more or less of given activities or even different ones? Is the Internet improving how people accomplish tasks or is it giving us a different kind of experience? Is the Internet shading the profile of people's everyday lives, the way washing machines made us cleaner, or the telephone connected us better, or frozen food changed our shopping and eating habits?

In probing which way – and how heavily – Internet users lean toward the Internet, we asked users to think hard about how they used the Internet. When do they choose to go to the Internet over the traditional offline ways of doing things? What is their level of commitment: Are they casual and intermittent about using the Internet, or are they dedicated and predictable?

We expected to learn some interesting things about the Internet from this kind of vertical exploration. Examining what draws people to the Internet and engages them there may shed light on where the Internet works well and where it doesn't. Seeing what

¹ Caroline Haythornthwaite, and Barry Wellman, "The Internet in Everyday Life", p. 31 in *The Internet in Everyday Life*, Barry Wellman and Caroline Haythornthwaite, eds., Blackwell Publishing, Oxford. 2002.

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characterizes the Internet habits of the heaviest users may show us where the Internet itself could change life in the future.

Part 2.

The Internet's value in everyday life: Americans admire it and find it a useful tool

The survey polled users' participation in 18 everyday activities that belonged to four clearcut categories.

To assemble a good list of activities, we followed insights gained from previous research and divided online activities into four categories: information seeking; communications; transactions; and entertainment. We chose several examples for each category. These examples are not meant to cover all kinds of activities, but rather to represent everyday tasks and typical recreations that Americans enjoy. We chose activities that would broadly represent what the Internet has to offer, that would resonate with a broad audience, and that would tap into our understanding of the Internet use gained from our past research. Recognizing, of course, our choice of particular activities might influence the findings, we tried to observe the specific but then draw generalizations from our observations.

We asked users not simply if they do these everyday activities online, but about their attitudes toward using the Internet and how valuable they think it is. We also asked them to amplify with their own words where they see the strengths and advantages of the Internet in their everyday lives.

People have a high opinion of the Internet's usefulness in everyday life.

Users think the Internet is a very good place to tend to the affairs of everyday life. In this survey, 92% of online Americans say using the Internet is a good way to get everyday information; 85% say it is a good way to communicate with other people; 75% say it is a good place to accomplish everyday tasks or transactions; and 69% say it is a good place to entertain themselves.

Esteem for the Internet's usefulness does not precisely translate into Internet use, however, as many different obstacles can interfere with actually doing a particular activity online. Each activity presents a different set of factors that could encourage different users to act either online or offline. For example, getting to a computer may be inconvenient for some people at times during the day, using an application may require too much sophistication for some users, contact with humans may be necessary to clarify a question or confusion that a Web site cannot.

Part 2. The Internet's value in everyday life: Americans admire it and find it a useful tool

Getting information is the most highly valued and most popular type of everyday activity done online.

Over 80% of Internet users have looked for answers to specific questions about a broad variety of issues from health care to religion to news. Looking for information is one of the first activities that people try as new users of the Internet. On a typical day, over one fifth of users will look for answers to their questions. In our previous surveys, we have seen surges in information seeking in certain very focused areas: looking for religious information, where the number of information seekers increased 94% from March 2000 to September 2002; looking for sports scores, where the growth rate was 73% from March 2000 to September 2002; and looking for health or medical information, where the number of users increased 59% from March 2000 to December 2002.²

We chose five examples of everyday activities where people could easily turn to the Internet for answers: getting the weather report; getting news; looking up phone numbers, addresses or zip codes; checking sports scores; and getting a map or driving instructions. All five appear among the most popular of all the everyday activities that we polled in this survey.

Furthermore, when we asked users to respond to a query posted on the Project's Web site to tell us in their own words about the biggest impact the Internet has on their daily lives, one of two most popular answers (the other being emailing) is "getting information." As one user described, "I can research something on the internet in a couple of hours that might take me a couple of days to find offline."

One information-seeking activity we queried stood out among all other activities. Of Internet users who look at maps or get directions in their everyday lives, 87% say they do it online. We were surprised that throughout this survey, positive responses about this activity surpassed those of every other activity on every measure that we polled. It is possible that the explanation lies in the difference between the online and the traditional offline ways of doing this. Applications like Mapquest and Yahoo Maps are quick, easy, and effective. The two offline alternatives, asking someone for directions or locating a map, finding the destination, and plotting a route, are both awkward and haphazard.

As one Internet user told us, "I rarely go anywhere without mapping the address online anymore. If I've never been there, I'll go out of my way to get an online map with directions or, if I'm not at a computer, I'll call someone to do the online mapping and confirm the directions."

² Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/toc.asp?Report=106>

Part 2. The Internet's value in everyday life: Americans admire it and find it a useful tool

Of those who check the weather, 69% do it online. Another user said to us, “I rely less on the daily local newscasts for the weather, instead relying on the National Weather Service’s gridzone forecasts for my zip code. I use this for traveling as well.”

Of those who get news, 63% do it online. One user described his method: “Every day before I leave the office, I scan Google News to see what the top news stories of the day are. If something interests me, I can read several versions of the story in different sources – including publications from other countries. I often get home too late to see the evening national or local news, but it is now easy to stay on top of the news... and to get a variety of news, in many cases.”

Of those who get sports scores (which is less than half of all people, a much smaller proportion than for every other activity but one, which is “looking for new people to meet or date”) 55% do it online. And of those who look for addresses, zip codes, and phone numbers, half will do it online.

Everyday Online Activities	
Among Internet users who ever do a given activity, the percentage who do it online.	
Activity and percentage (In parentheses) of those who do this activity at all in their lives, either online or offline	Internet users who do this activity online
Get map or directions (88%)	87%
Communicate with friends / family (95)	79
Check weather (86)	69
Get news (88)	63
Get sports scores (47)	55
Buy tickets (74)	55
Send cards, etc. (81)	52
Get addresses, zip codes, phone numbers (74)	50
Play games (74)	46
Plan gatherings (66)	46
Pay bills, banking (82)	44
Pursue hobbies (80)	34
Buy daily items (78)	33
Find new people (25)	26
Listen to music (87)	23
Schedule appointments (69)	22
Read for fun (83)	18
Watch videos (70)	16

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Tracking Survey. Nov.-Dec., 2003, N=1358. Margin of error is ±3%.

Users value everyday communications on the Internet very highly, and email dominates the category as the most popular communications activity.

As a class, everyday communications was the second most popular set of activities that people actually do online. Some 79% of respondents who said they communicate with friends or family during their everyday lives say they will do this online. Surely many of the 85% of Internet users who said the Internet was a good place for communicating with people had email in mind when they answered.

Part 2. The Internet's value in everyday life: Americans admire it and find it a useful tool

One respondent to our online query said, “[The Internet] is my connection with people. I use it to email people I know. I use it to visit message boards to get information and meet people with the same interests. It is my virtual world at a time where I need some way of communication because I am out of from my normal friends and family because I live in a different part of the country.”

There is an early indication that Internet users may become somewhat less smitten with email than they have been. In a recent Pew Internet & American Life Project study, we found that 25% of Internet users said that because of spam, they were actually reducing their use of email. In personal elaborations during Project interviews, they have said, for example, that they discontinue their children's email accounts, that they turn to the phone for really critical messages, that they sometimes just don't have the energy to face the mountains of spam in the inboxes.³ Nonetheless, of all the everyday activities we asked about in this study, communicating with friends or family was the second most popular one people do online, and it was far and away the most popular of the communications activities.

When we asked users to articulate where the Internet has had the most important impact on their daily lives, one of predominant answers was in communicating with friends and family.

“As a friend and family member I can communicate to relatives across the country and around the world on a regular basis for no more than the cost of my Internet service,” writes one respondent to our online query. “Emailing relatives and friends is great because I can reply at my convenience and I'm not interrupted by a phone call when I really can't talk even though I would love to talk.”

And another, “I have many so many friends online and it really helps keep me connected. Although I love my children with all my heart, there is only so much conversation you can have with children under 4 years old, and talking to adults just to chat can be scarce for me without email and instant messages.”

As far as other kinds of online communications, 52% of those who said they send greetings, cards, or invitations in their everyday lives, say they will do that online. Some 46% who say they plan social get-togethers will do it online.

One Internet user describes the value for planning get-togethers: “I use the Internet to find alumni for my high school alumni association. This was not possible 10 years ago. We now have annual reunions and communicate with people we haven't seen or talked to in 50 years!”

And even 26% who say they are looking for new people to meet or date will do it online.

³ Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/toc.asp?Report=102>

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Users are more skeptical about the value of the Internet for everyday transactions, but a few transaction activities are attracting more new users than any other online activity.

Although doing transactions has become the fastest growing category of online activities, the sheer numbers of people making any online transaction still lags well behind the number of people who are seeking information or communicating online. For example, although the number of those who do online banking grew 127% from March 2000 to October 2002, the number of people doing online banking on a typical day grew from 4 to just 8 million.⁴ Only 44% of Internet users who ever do banking in their everyday lives do it online, making it one of the less popular activities among those we polled.

Of those who buy tickets for events, 55% do it online. Of those who buy everyday items like groceries or books, 33% do it online; and 22% of those who make appointments, do it online.

The contrast between the high percentage of people who believe in principle that the Internet is a good place to conduct transactions (75%) and the still low percentage who actually do these things online (which ranges from 22% – 55% for the range of activities we polled) suggests a few possible things. First, most users may still not be adept enough to manipulate the applications for conducting transactions. Second, most users may not trust the Internet enough themselves to believe it will work correctly and effectively for them. Third, offline transactions may be easier for people to accomplish in many circumstances.

Past Pew Internet & American Life Project surveys show that online experience increases the likelihood people will use a variety of Internet applications and increases users' trust in the Internet. This suggests online transactions will continue to grow and become more popular over time.

Many Internet users submitted testimonials to our online query about how Internet transactions affect their daily lives and decisions. Writes one, "We pay most of our bills online and choose credit cards based on account info being available online."

Users are least enamored with the Internet as a place to go for their everyday entertainment.

Fewer users turn to the Internet as a source of entertainment than to get information, communicate, or do transactions. Among users who say they engage in different forms of entertainment, 46% say they play games online, the most popular among the entertainment activities that we polled. Some 34% of users pursue their hobbies online;

⁴ Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/toc.asp?Report=106>

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23% listen to music or the radio; 18% read for pleasure, and 16% watch videos of some sort online.

One user describes what the Internet-as-entertainment means to her. "It is a diversion, a way to unwind. More interesting than watching TV since you can talk back to the TV till you are blue in the face and no response, but here on the net you get back as good or better than you give out!"

And another appreciates the more passive engagement, "For entertainment, there are blogs and online journals that I read. There are online versions of comic strips and newspapers to read. I find out about some books I might want to read by looking at online book reviews or books that people discuss in their online diaries. I listen to the radio over the Internet, often while I work."

The profile of the users who turn to the Internet for their entertainment is distinctive. There are more young users (those under 30) and more men in this cohort. Those who use the Internet for entertainment are likely to be less educated and less affluent and have spent fewer years online.

Although fewer people extolled the virtues of the Internet for entertainment purposes, those who did really worked at it and came up with ways of using the Internet that enhanced their entertainment. One writes: "Last night, I, like 80 million other Americans, watched the Super Bowl. Throughout the broadcast, we kept coming up with questions, disputing facts, and we had a general desire to seek more and more information. Early in the first quarter, we fired up the laptop. All night we kept hitting the Web to see information. Examples included repeating commercials that we missed, finding out who wrote and sang the song 'Ballroom Blitz', viewing the moveon.org commercial that was censored by CBS, protesting to CBS that they censored commercials, seeking sport facts..."

Part 3.

The Internet's integration into everyday life: It gains a toehold in a mostly offline world

Most Internet users are more likely to do everyday activities in the traditional offline ways than online.

Two different measures indicate that Internet users who do any given activity in their everyday lives are more likely to do that activity offline than online. First, we find that among Internet users who sometimes do a given activity offline and sometimes do it online, many more were likely to choose the offline option more frequently. And second, among Internet users who do a given activity, many more are likely to do that activity exclusively offline than exclusively online.

First, it made sense to us that many Internet users who perform a given activity would find themselves toggling back and forth between online and offline modes. As people move about in their everyday lives, sometimes using a computer is more convenient or appropriate for them, and sometimes it is not.

Two Internet users describe this online/offline toggling and the advantages of each: “I still rely on the old tried and true ways when I get up (in the morning), CNN, my local channels, the newspaper...Habit, I guess, but if I want to find some future news or something special, the Internet is the way.” And the second writes, “I do 90% of my banking and bill paying online. I visit the bank for manual deposits and ATM transactions 6 – 8 times a year.”

We asked these bi-modal users – those who toggle between online and offline – which mode they used more often, offline or online. In every case but one, many more bi-modal users said they more frequently did these activities offline than online. Among the most marked are in areas of entertainment, communicating with friends and family, shopping for daily goods, getting ubiquitous information like news and weather. Some of those activities where the Internet showed the strongest pull are the killer everyday app of getting maps or directions (48% do that more often online) and getting addresses, phone numbers or zip codes, doing banking, buying tickets, playing games, and getting sports scores.

Part 3: The Internet's integration into everyday life

Even though our tracking surveys indicate that over time, more and more Internet users are going online to try different everyday activities, large numbers of them remain in the camp of those who never have gone online for some popular activities. When we asked users if they did a particular activity exclusively online or exclusively offline, we saw the same pattern of results that we saw in preferences among those who toggle back and forth between the online and offline worlds. Particularly in the category of entertainment, users stick to the offline world. Nearly two-thirds and upwards continue to pursue these entertainment activities exclusively offline. Users show the most commitment to being online for the same kinds of interactive or purposeful activities that led the “togglers” to prefer online mode: 56% of those who get maps or directions will do it online exclusively. Between a quarter and a third check weather, buy tickets, or get sports scores exclusively online.

Everyday Activities Done Exclusively Offline or Online		
More Internet users do everyday activities exclusively offline than exclusively online.		
Activity	Percent of Internet users who do this activity only <u>offline</u>	Percent of Internet users who do this activity only <u>online</u>
Get maps or directions	14%	56%
Communicate with friends / family	20	21
Check weather	31	31
Get news	38	17
Get sports scores	45	26
Buy tickets	45	28
Send cards, invites	47	17
Get addresses, zip codes, phone numbers	50	19
Play games	54	20
Plan gatherings	53	20
Do bills, banking	56	20
Pursue hobbies	66	10
Buy daily items	68	9
Find new people	76	12
Listen to music	77	6
Schedule appointments	78	9
Read for fun	82	5
Watch videos	84	4

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Tracking .Nov.-Dec. 2003. N=1358. Margin of error is 3%.

Part 3: The Internet's integration into everyday life

Once people start using the Internet for their everyday activities, however, they show signs of making it a habit.

Another measure of how well users blend the Internet into daily rhythms is regularity of use: Is the Internet becoming a habit? We explored whether users who go online for everyday activities log on casually and intermittently, or with more committed, dedicated regularity.

We divided the activities into three groups: daily ones, like checking the weather, or getting the news; regular but more infrequent ones, like paying bills or getting maps; and ones that are discretionary and without a time frame, like listening to music or watching video clips. We asked people how often they go online for various activities, and we found that the majority of users went online with what seemed like appropriate frequency.

Of those who do perform what we consider “daily” activities online, well more than half say they go online every day or several times a week to perform those activities. We also found that for many of the most discretionary and recreational activities, more users went online everyday or several times a week. For some activities, like doing banking or getting maps, we deemed frequency a less reliable measure because of their irregular, unpredictable demands.

Frequency of Online Activities		
Most users who go online for daily or discretionary activities will do so with regularity.		
	Every day or multiple times a week	Fewer times / several times a month or less
Activities (N/ margin of error)		
Get news (767/ ±3.9%)	70%	29%
Check sports scores (358/5.7%)	61	39
Communicate with others (1046/3.3%)	62	38
Check weather (813/3.8%)	55	44
Read for pleasure (195/7.7%)	55	45
Listen to music (254/6.7%)	55	45
Schedule appointments (224/7.2%)	53	48
Play games (443/5.1%)	52	48
Pursue hobbies (374/5.5%)	39	61
Watch videos (138/9.1%)	33	67

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Tracking .Nov.-Dec. 2003. N=1358. Overall margin of error is 3%.

The daily activity that users engage in most often was getting news. Some 40% of Internet users who get the news online say they log on daily, and a total of 70% do that at least several times a week. Some 25% of the online weather bugs will check weather daily, and 55% in all will check weather at least several times a week. Some 20% of online sports fans check sports scores daily, and 61% at least several times a week.

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Among discretionary recreational activities, 55% of the online music lovers listen to music or read online for pleasure at least several times a week; 52% of the online gamers will play games at least several times a week.

These data strongly indicate that for people who do use the Internet for their everyday activities, albeit a minority of users, they are going online in a way that suggests they are incorporating internet use into their lives in a more regular, predictable, habitual way.

The Internet's strong suits are the efficiencies it offers and the abundant content it warehouses.

Common elements emerge from this survey that shed light on where the Internet works well for users and where it doesn't.

Efficiency: fast, convenient, and on-demand

The Internet is well known for its efficiency. Each one of the most popular everyday activities we polled is characterized by the efficiency of doing that activity online.

One Internet mom says, "It is easier for me with two kids to find more information on the Internet than to drive to the library for just a small amount of info."

The Internet can eliminate waits standing in line or hanging on hold to buy tickets, do banking, or make appointments. The Internet lets people choose their moment for these tasks: Users can shop at midnight instead of waiting for stores to open or call up weather, scores, and news stories instead of waiting for media broadcasts to deliver them. And they can do all these things from the comfort of home.

"I have access to gourmet shops, yarn shops, quilt shops, huge bookstores – all things I might otherwise have to drive to Dallas to buy," wrote one user to our online query.

The Internet can pare impedimenta like stamps, envelopes and paper checks from tasks that involve processing and communicating. The Internet can lop off much of the back and forth of face-to-face interactions and exchanges of day to day life. It streamlines the multiple steps toward reaching agreement among numbers of people, as in organizing groups, or numbers of alternatives, as in agreeing on a common time or even place to meet.

Content: abundant, organized, searchable

The Internet holds an ever-growing repository of content, a source for much of the reference material of daily life: maps, phone books, newspapers, dictionaries, address books, catalogs, records in far greater quantity that exceeds what anyone has in his own possession. The content resides at users' fingertips, organized, easily accessed, with all

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the information specifically searchable and retrievable, not lost amid cluttered shelves or under car seats.

One Internet user describes this: “The net is where I go first for all types of information, weather, news, health info, phone numbers, restaurant menus, store hours, maps... at this point, I am surprised if what I need is not on the net!”

Another adds, “I also use it as a research tool, both for work and outside of work. At work, I use it to check spelling, definitions of things. Right now, I am using some information on map projections I got off of a geographer's Web site. I also use the internet to look up journal articles, to find additional information to enhance my teaching, to provide inspiration for different types of laboratory activities in my classes. I also use it for “research” outside of work – I've looked up knitting techniques and quilting patterns on the Internet and I've also looked for information on historical events or customs mentioned in books I'm reading that I am not familiar with.”

The Internet's weak points are its required user skills and the incomplete experience it offers.

On the other hand, there are cases where far fewer people turn to the web. Looking at the everyday activities that are less popular and less engaging, we find some common elements suggesting points where the Internet works less well. Among these activities are pursuing hobbies, reading for pleasure, watching videos, purchasing everyday goods, and listening to music.

More skill required; less quality returned

The survey shows that overall, people are less enthusiastic about the Internet as a place to go for entertainment and recreation than they are for other kinds of activities. For many of these activities - listening to music, watching video clips – more familiarity and technical adeptness are required than in most other daily Internet activities. And the quality of the product, particularly compared to the offline alternatives, doesn't match up to offline alternatives at times.

Incomplete experience

The Internet offers a less than whole experience for many day-to-day activities. You can email your friends and family, but sometimes there's nothing like hearing a voice.

Writes one grandmother, “My daughter in Germany and I talked every day and didn't have to pay a huge phone bill. I have a webcam and a microphone that I used to help watch my granddaughter grow up, not missing a word or an inch of her growth. When they finally came home it was like they hadn't been away for four years, with the

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exception of not getting to love them physically. But she knows what Grandma's arms feel like now."

Or, you can read articles and even books on the web, but you can't reproduce the sensory experience of curling up in a chair, holding a book. As one Internet user writes, "I no longer subscribe to the M-F newspaper. I get my news online from several news sources including online newspapers. I still like having a physical paper in hand on the weekends though."

Part 4.

Different groups' use of the Internet in everyday life: Online experience and fast access lead to richer Internet use

30% of online Americans say the Internet plays a major role in their lives.

Thirty percent of Internet users tell us that the Internet plays a major role in how they live their daily lives. When asked about their Internet behaviors, this group we call “major players” describes how they are much more active and engaged in everyday online activities compared to the rest of Internet users.

Writes one major player, “I use the internet for absolutely everything. My work, my finances, paying bills, homework, medical advice, weather, entertainment. Only thing I do not obtain online is groceries and I could do that if I wanted. I will even look at the computer if I want to know what time it is before I will look at a clock. I never turn on TV anymore or use a dictionary or encyclopedia or anything like that. I do read books but I buy them online.”

Who are the “major players”? As a group, the “major players” are more likely to be better educated; 49% are college graduates, compared to 30% of other Internet users, and also more affluent; 38% have family incomes over \$75,000 per year, compared to 21% for the rest of Internet users. They are more likely to be Internet veterans, 65% have been online six years or more, compared to 42% of other Internet users. And they are better connected; 76% of major players have a broadband connection from home and/or work, compared to 41% of other Internet users.

How popular are Internet activities among major players compared to the rest of Internet users? First, among Internet users who do any given activity, more major players will do that activity online than the rest of Internet users. For example, among the most popular activities, 83% of major players have checked weather online compared to 62% of others; 68% have ordered tickets online compared to 49% of others; 73% have looked up telephone numbers, addresses or zip codes online, compared to 38% of others.

How heavily is the Internet favored among major players compared to traditional offline methods? Among major players, 95% look for maps and directions online, compared to

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34% offline.⁵ Some 91% of major players communicate with others online, compared to 76% offline. And 83% of major players check the weather online, compared to 60% offline. Some 75% of major players check sports scores online, compared to 67% offline. Some 83% of major players get the news online, compared to 75% offline. And 68% of major players get tickets online compared to 62% offline.

The online Americans who say the Internet plays a major role in their daily life are more likely to do everyday activities online than others		
Activity	MP	others
Get maps or directions	95%	83%
Communicate with friends / family	91	75
Check weather	83	62
Get news	83	53
Get sports scores	75	46
Get addresses, zip codes, phone numbers	73	38
Send cards, invites	69	45
Buy tickets	68	49
Plan gatherings	65	36
Do bills, banking	64	35
Play games	58	42
Buy daily items	51	23
Pursue hobbies	46	28
Find new people	42	20
Schedule appointments	39	14
Listen to music	36	16
Watch videos	33	8
Read for fun	30	13

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Tracking Survey, Nov.-Dec. 2003. N=1358. Margin of error is ±3%.

players who get news online will get their news exclusively online compared to 25% of others. And 69% will look for maps and directions exclusively online compared to 63% of the rest.

Finally, among Internet users who do an activity online, major players are more likely to do all those activities more frequently than the rest of Internet users. For example, for activities that people often do daily, major players are much more likely to do those online at least several times a week than the rest of Internet users. Some 69% of major

How does this leaning toward the Internet of “major players” compare to the behavior of other Internet users? Major players differ from other Internet users because they are more likely to rely on the Internet to perform activities and chores than they are to rely on offline alternatives. Among Internet users in general, we noted only one case where people went to the Internet more than to the traditional offline way of doing things. That was in looking for maps and directions, where people were more likely to go online rather than look at physical maps or ask others. However, for major players, the online world is often preferable to the offline world for all kinds of activities.

One user writes how she wakes up to the Internet, “I am on the Internet before I am on my coffee pot. Checking work email, headlines, and online banking.”

Among Internet users who do given activities, major players are much more likely to say they do that activity *exclusively* online than other Internet users. For example, 30% of major

⁵ Since most Internet users will do activities both online and offline, the total of those who do an activity online and offline can be more than 100%.

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players check weather online at least several times a week, compared to 47% of the rest. Some 81% of major players get news online several times a week, compared to 63% of others. Some 79% of major players communicate with others online at least several times a week, compared to 52% of others.

So, what do major players mean when they say the Internet plays a major role in their lives? These findings show it means that compared to the rest of Internet users, they do more activities online, do those activities more frequently online, choose to go online for those activities more often than they do them in the traditional offline way. This profile suggests that major players are integrating the Internet into their everyday lives in a richer, more complex way than the rest of Internet users.

“Oh heavens,” writes one major player, “I cannot survive without my internet. We use it for everything, searching school topics, looking up information about a broken motor on a truck, doing research when we are wanting to buy a car. I use it for work, for play, for education. It has replaced the phone, the mail, and the encyclopedias.”

Of those who said the Internet plays a major role in their everyday lives, 92% said that their lives would be affected if they couldn't use the Internet at all tomorrow, 59% said it would affect their lives a lot, and 23% some, and 11% a little. Compared to the rest of the Internet users, where 51% say their lives would be affected if they couldn't use the Internet tomorrow. This dramatic difference in users' descriptions of how their lives would be changed without the Internet shows how much major players have embedded Internet use into their everyday lives.

One respondent reinforces this sentiment, “If the Internet would be gone tomorrow my entire world would be turned upside down. It would be like starting all over again!”

Broadband users appreciate the Internet in everyday life.

Internet users with fast connections go online to pursue their everyday activities in far greater numbers than users with dial-up connections. Those with fast connections both at home and at work are even more likely to turn to the Internet to perform an everyday activity. For example, among those who buy tickets to events, 74% of those with ubiquitous broadband connections will buy tickets online, compared to 62% of those with a broadband connection at home *or* at work, and 48% of those with only dial-up connections.

Broadband users engage in the everyday activities online more frequently than dial-up users. For example, 55% of those with broadband check weather online do it at least several times a week, compared to 51% of those with only dial-up connections; 76% of those with broadband who get the news online will do it at least several times a week, compared to 62% of those with only dial-up connections.

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Broadband users do more everyday activities online than dial-up users			
Activity	Broadband at home AND work	Broadband at home OR work	Dial-Up only
Get maps or directions	94%	91%	83%
Communicate with friends / family	92	83	77
Check weather	91	77	62
Get sports scores	89	66	43
Get news	83	73	52
Get addresses, zip codes, phone numbers	77	60	39
Buy tickets	74	62	48
Do bills, banking	70	53	36
Send cards, invites	67	56	50
Plan gatherings	64	51	42
Buy daily items	51	40	25
Play games	48	47	45
Pursue hobbies	45	38	30
Schedule appointments	45	30	13
Find new people	43	30	21
Listen to music	38	29	15
Watch videos	32	22	9
Read for fun	30	20	16

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Tracking Survey, Nov.-Dec. 2003. N=1358. Margin of error is ±3%.

Significantly, 65% of those with broadband connections at work and home say the Internet plays a major role in their lives, compared to 40% of those who have broadband at work only, 28% of those who have broadband at home only, and 16% of those who only have dial-up connections. Likewise, when asked how much daily activities and routines would be affected if they couldn't use the Internet tomorrow, 47% of those with broadband everywhere said "a lot", compared to 32% of those with broadband only at work, 19% of those with broadband only at home, and 11% of those with dial-up connections.

More men use the Internet for everyday information gathering and entertainment more than women.

Men are more likely than women to perceive the Internet as a good way to do some things online. Some 78% of men think the Internet is a good place to go for transactions, compared to 71% of women. And 72% of men think it is a good place to go for personal

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entertainment, compared to 66% of women. Translating those perceptions of Internet usefulness into action, among those who do any given activity, men are a bit more likely to go online to do a few things, although they are primarily information-gathering activities and entertainment activities. Some 63% of men who check sports scores will do it online, compared to 40% of women. Some 72% of men who check the weather will do it online, compared to 65% of women. Some 65% of men who get news, will do it online, compared to 60% of women. Some 25% of men who schedule appointments will do it online, compared to 19% of women. And as for entertainment, 40% of men will pursue hobbies online compared to 27% of women; 24% of men will read for pleasure online, compared to 13% of women, and 25% of men will listen to music online, compared to 20% of women.

There are a few notable differences in how thoroughly men and women blend Internet use into daily routines. Among the activities they do online, men are more likely than women to do those online activities on a regular, frequent basis. Among activities people would be likely to do daily, men do them more frequently: 66% of men who check sports scores online do it at least several times a week, compared to 46% of women. Some 60% of men who check weather online, do it at least several times a week, compared to 50% of women. Some 79% of men who get news online do it at least several times a week, compared to 63% of women. Some 56% of men who schedule appointments online do it at least several times a week, compared to 49% of women. On the other hand, women show a slightly deeper engagement with Internet use for communicating with friends and family. Some 64% of women who communicate with friends and family online do it at least several times a week, compared to 59% of men, a finding consistent with past Pew Internet Project research about the importance among women of the Internet in interpersonal relations.

Young adult Internet users hold the highest opinion of the Internet's value in their everyday lives.

The youngest group of adult users, those 18 – 29 years, stand out primarily for their attitude about the value of Internet use. A significantly larger number of younger users, 96%, declared the Internet a good way to get information, compared to 91% of all older users. They also think it is a good place to do transactions, 83%, compared to 72% of older users. And finally, they think the Internet is a good place to go for entertainment, 78% compared to 67% of older users. However, these attitudes don't translate into any patterns of increased Internet use by the youngest users.

The oldest group, those over 65 years old, stands out in a different way. They are usually the most timid among Internet users. But in one area, communications among family and friends, they lead the pack. More older Internet users, 89%, think the Internet is a good place to go for social interactions or communications compared to 85% of younger users. Among Internet users who communicate with friends and family, 87% of those 65 years and over will do it online, compared to 79% of those under 65 years. Of those who send

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cards and invitations, 58% of those over 65 years will do it online, compared to 52% of those under 65 years old.

Part 5.

Conclusions

The Internet's toehold in everyday life is just beginning.

The Pew Internet & American Life Project findings here suggest that the reach of Internet use into everyday life is broad but shallow. That is, while many users go online to do many things, the extent of their use is relatively limited. Most Internet users will more often resort to traditional offline ways of accomplishing their tasks or entertaining themselves. Nonetheless, a number of findings suggest that in the future, the Internet may integrate itself more deeply into everyday life.

First, the Pew Internet Project has seen in past work that the most experienced users generally represent the first wave among many who will follow. In this study, these experienced users are more likely than newer users to more thoroughly and richly integrate the Internet into their everyday activities. Experienced users will do more of these activities online. And they are more likely to choose to do given activities on the Internet over the traditional offline ways. We guess that others will follow suit as they become more experienced.

Further, we see that once people do try online activities, they show signs of becoming committed to doing that online activity regularly and predictably. That is not to say they use the Internet more than the traditional offline ways of accomplishing things, but they do return to the Internet in a habitual way.

And finally, users consistently hold a very high opinion of the Internet as a way to do everyday activities. But as yet, they don't fully act on those convictions. Most Internet users *think* the Internet is good for doing everyday activities, but fewer of them actually go to the Internet to *do* these things. Since there are still many obstacles between people and their Internet use – getting to a computer, getting a connection, conquering technical skills, building trust, and many more – it is likely that as obstacles wear down, more people will act on what they believe and use the Internet more in their daily lives.

Some users report that the Internet is changing the way they live.

The Internet indeed shows signs of changing some fundamentals of the way Americans do things in their everyday lives. Here, Internet users identified three ways the Internet

Part 5: Conclusions

had most significantly improved their everyday lives: It brings them more information, improves social contacts, and helps them act more efficiently.

The Internet has made users better informed, bringing a lot more news and information into their lives. Describes one, “My home page acts like a newspaper to me, and I check it often throughout the day. I am definitely more “plugged in” to world, regional and local events via the net, and can do this a LOT more effectively than reading newspapers and magazines, or watching TV.”

The Internet has made users more connected to more people, as they can keep in better and more frequent touch with more family and friends, be they old friends or new ones made on the Internet.

And finally, the Internet has made them more efficient: They say they can do lots of things when and where they want to.

It seems likely that as the Internet becomes more ingrained in our daily lives, these and other positive changes will become more defined and dramatic. As a whole, these findings suggest that the Internet is not largely driving the engines of everyday life, but it is making some of them more powerful and helping them run more smoothly.

Appendix

The tasks of everyday life and the Internet				
<i>Among ALL Internet users, the percentage who do an activity regularly in their lives (whether offline or online), the percentage who do the activity exclusively online, exclusively offline, or both online and offline.</i>				
Activity or task	Among all Internet users, the percent who do this activity in their lives – online or offline	Percent of Internet users who do it online only	Percent who do it offline only	Percent who do it offline and online (Broken down further into the percent of this group who do the task mostly online or mostly offline)
Commonplace information searches				
Look for a map or driving directions	88%	49%	12%	27% (48% of them do it mostly online and 40% do it mostly offline)
Check weather reports	87%	27%	27%	33% (26% of them do it mostly online and 69% do it mostly offline)
Get news	88%	15%	33%	40% (22% of them get it mostly online and 71% get it mostly offline)
Look up telephone numbers, addresses	74%	14%	37%	23% (34% of them get it mostly online and 61% get it mostly offline)
Check sports scores	47%	12%	21%	14% (32% of them get it mostly online and 61% get it mostly offline)
Commonplace transactions				
Buy tickets for concerts, movies	74%	21%	33%	20% (38% of them do it mostly online and 57% do it mostly offline)
Pay bills, do banking	82%	16%	46%	21% (34% of them do it mostly online and 54% do it mostly offline)
Purchase everyday items like books, groceries, CDs	79%	7%	53%	19% (5% of them do it mostly online and 93% do it mostly offline)
Schedule appointments or meetings	69%	6%	54%	9% (39% of them do it mostly online and 55% do it mostly offline)
Everyday kinds of communications				
Communicate with friends and family	95%	20%	19%	56% (17% of them do it mostly online and 72% do it mostly offline)
Send greeting cards, invitations	81%	14%	38%	29% (26% of them do it mostly online and 66% do it mostly offline)
Plan get-togethers for clubs or groups	65%	13%	35%	17% (24% of them do it mostly online and 66% do it mostly offline)
Look for new people to meet or date	26%	3%	19%	4% (18% of them do it mostly online and 60% do it mostly offline)
Everyday entertainment activities				
Play games	75%	15%	40%	20% (33% of them do it mostly online and 60% do it mostly offline)
Pursue hobbies	81%	8%	53%	20% (16% of them do it mostly online and 68% do it mostly offline)
Listen to music or radio	87%	5%	67%	15% (10% of them do it mostly online and 84% do it mostly offline)
Read for pleasure	83%	4%	68%	11% (24% of them do it mostly online and 68% do it mostly offline)
Watch videos, previews, cartoons	70%	3%	59%	8% (9% of them do it mostly online and 87% do it mostly offline)

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project November-December 2003 survey. N= 2,013 in full sample and 1,358 Internet users. Margin of error is ±3%.

Methodology

This report is based on the findings of a daily tracking survey on Americans' use of the Internet. The results in this report are based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates between November 18 and December 14, 2003, among a sample of 2,013 adults, 18 and older. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 2 percentage points. For results based Internet users (n=1358), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys may introduce some error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

The sample for this survey is a random digit sample of telephone numbers selected from telephone exchanges in the continental United States. The random digit aspect of the sample is used to avoid "listing" bias and provides representation of both listed and unlisted numbers (including not-yet-listed numbers). The design of the sample achieves this representation by random generation of the last two digits of telephone numbers selected on the basis of their area code, telephone exchange, and bank number.

New sample was released daily and was kept in the field for at least five days. This ensures that complete call procedures were followed for the entire sample. Additionally, the sample was released in replicates to make sure that the telephone numbers called are distributed appropriately across regions of the country. At least 10 attempts were made to complete an interview at every household in the sample. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making contact with a potential respondent. Interview refusals were recontacted at least once in order to try again to complete an interview. All interviews completed on any given day were considered to be the final sample for that day. The completion rate for this survey was 31.3%.

Non-response in telephone interviews produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population, and these subgroups are likely to vary also on questions of substantive interest. In order to compensate for these known biases, the sample data are weighted in analysis. The demographic weighting parameters are derived from a special analysis of the most recently available Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (March 2003). This analysis produces population parameters for the demographic characteristics of adults age 18 or older, living in households that contain a telephone. These parameters are then compared with the sample characteristics to construct sample weights. The weights are derived using an iterative technique that simultaneously balances the distribution of all weighting parameters.