

POURING THE FOUNDATION



As with most endeavors, we need to begin by placing a good foundation. And we will start by visiting an online site familiar to almost everyone—Google. If you are one of the people who still think that Google is just a search engine, you will soon find out that the folks at Google have been busy little bees launching many other handy tools. One basic application the company has developed is e-mail, but at Google, e-mail is now Gmail.

GMAIL

If you work, chances are that you have an e-mail account. Many of us would say, “unfortunately, I have an e-mail account” because the use of e-mail has grown to the point that it can take over a good portion

FORMING THE FOUNDATION

Setting up an e-mail account is the first step in building a foundation for participation in the Web 2.0 guild. You will achieve this quest by successfully signing up for a Gmail account.

Following are the items you will need:

- Computer
- Internet connection (DSL or Broadband)
- Browser
- E-mail account

Remember to choose your account name wisely, particularly if your participation in social media will be business-oriented.

of your day with reading, sorting, deleting, worrying about deleting, and other such non-efficient nonsense. Anyway, usually e-mail is set up to be accessed through another program such as Microsoft Outlook. And usually you cannot simply access your e-mail account at work from any other location but your work place. This is an important difference from Gmail. With a Gmail account, you can access your e-mail from any computer as long as you have a browser and can get an Internet connection.

So here is your first task. Oh, and if you thought you were going to get through this without actively participating, think again because that would be so not Web 2.0. In each section, you are going to be given tasks to complete. And if you really want to

have fun, you can look at each one as a type of quest—this first quest line is themed after the title of this chapter.

So the first step is to collect the items you will need. Most definitely you will need a computer and a robust Internet connection. Some of these sites are media-heavy and require a lot of bandwidth. As for the browser—choose the one with which you are most familiar. Some examples are Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, and Apple Safari.

“Why do I have to sign up for a Gmail account when I already have an e-mail account at work or home?”

Ok, that is a very good question. And in fact, you will see from the quest that you already need to have an e-mail account with which to begin. The reason a Gmail account is recommended is that many of the places you will be going will end up sending you e-mails for registration confirmations, updates, notices, and any other type of information that you request.

GETTING TO A SPECIFIC WEB SITE

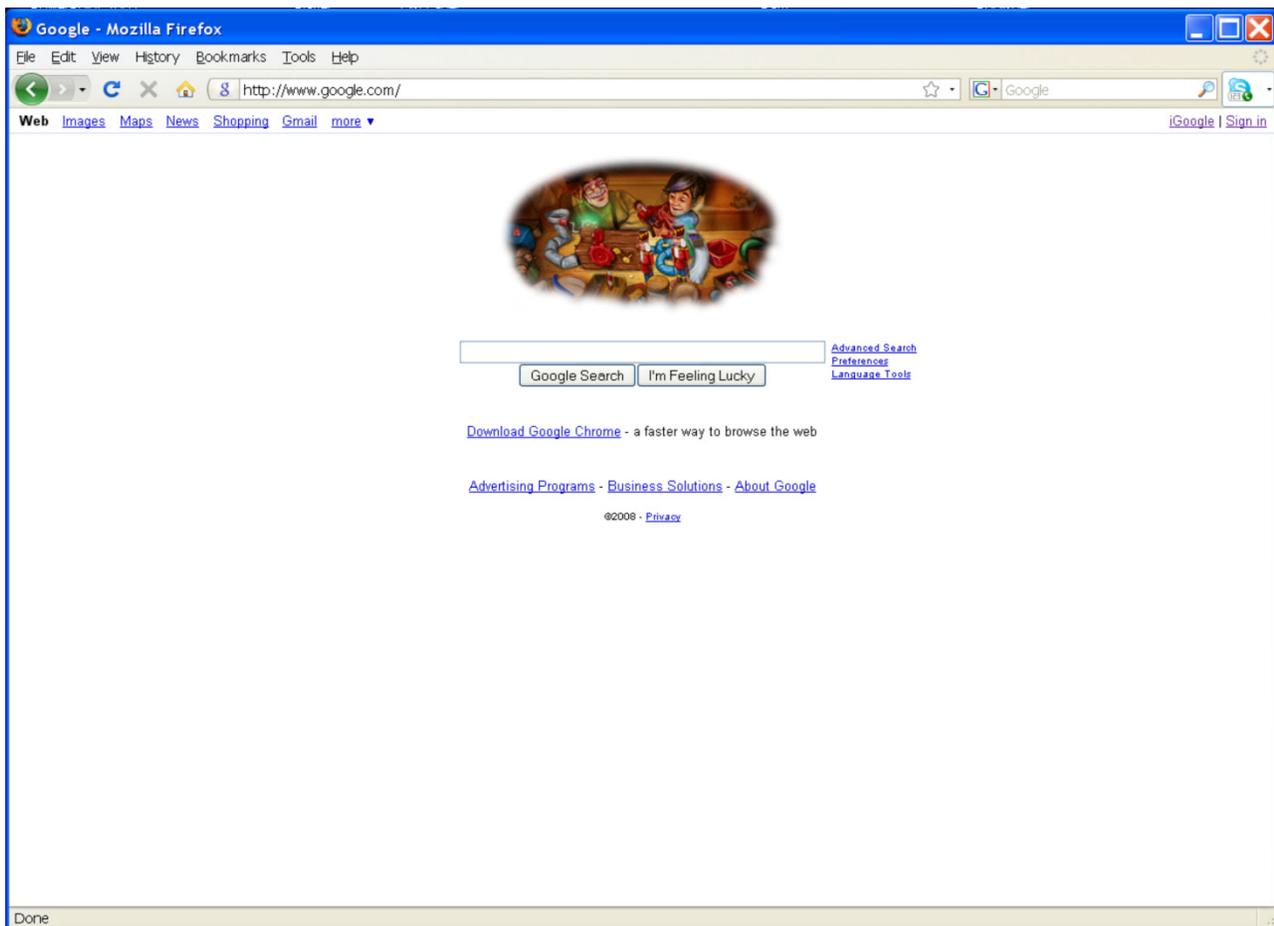
There are several methods of launching a particular Web site:

- Type the address in the address bar at the top of the screen.
- Click a link that automatically takes you to the site.
- Set a particular site as your home page.

All of us already seem to be inundated with e-mails so by having this separate account, you have a space dedicated solely for social media participation and information. Plus it is free and Google gives you fun themes to make your Gmail page that much more fun to visit.

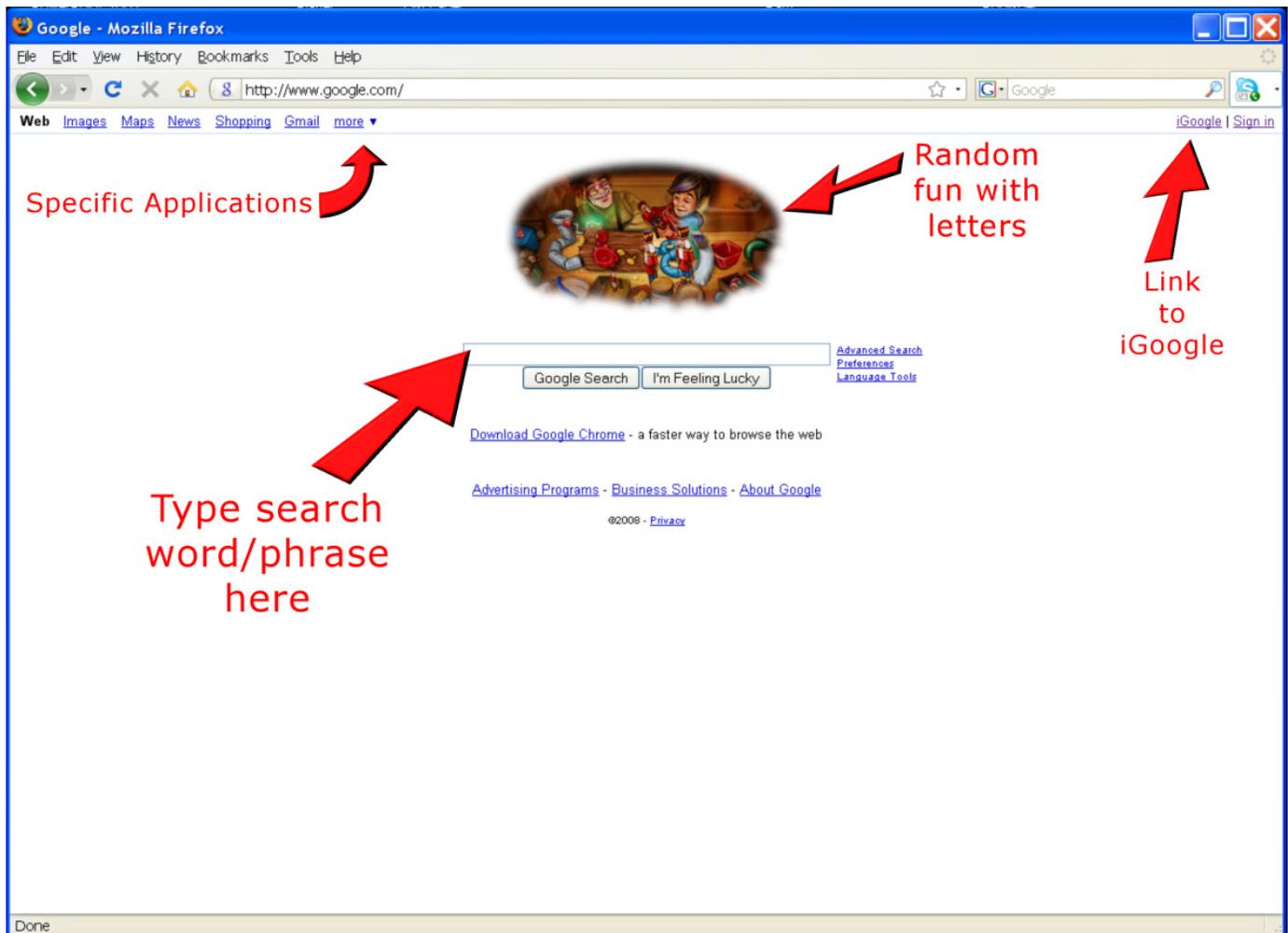
Everyone ready, comfortably sitting at your computer with your browser displayed on the screen? Let's go:

Point the browser to the Google search page at <http://www.google.com>. If you successfully reach this site, your screen should look something like the following figure:

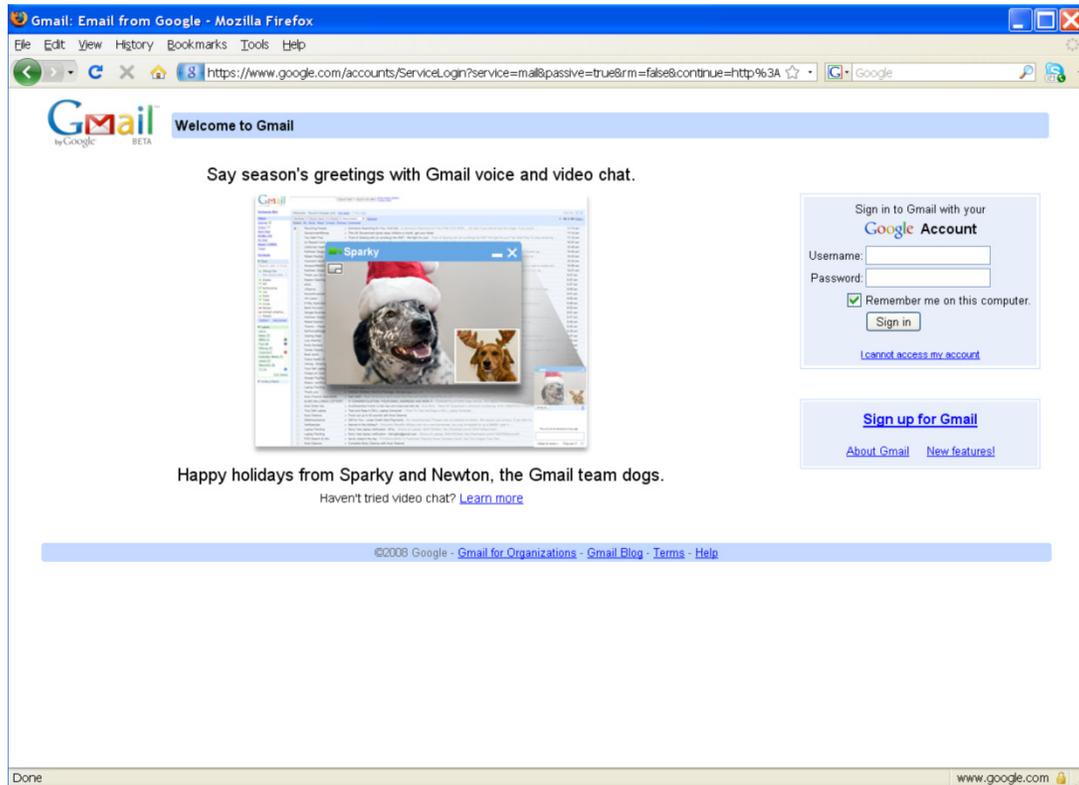


Your screen may look slightly different if you are using a different browser—the browser used in these examples is Mozilla Firefox. Also, Google tends to get a little creative with their name at different times of the year. This screenshot was taken during the Christmas season; typically Google will display their brightly colored name in place of the picture shown on this screenshot.

Now, many of us probably go to this screen often, type in our search term or phrase, and never spend much time looking around. After all, Google has made the search bar the most prominent feature. All the other tools I hinted at earlier are tucked away behind those little, tiny words. Below is another screenshot that highlights specific components on the main Google page. But before we get too far ahead of ourselves, we need to remember why we are here: to sign up for a Gmail account. Look, up at the top! One of those little words says, "Gmail."

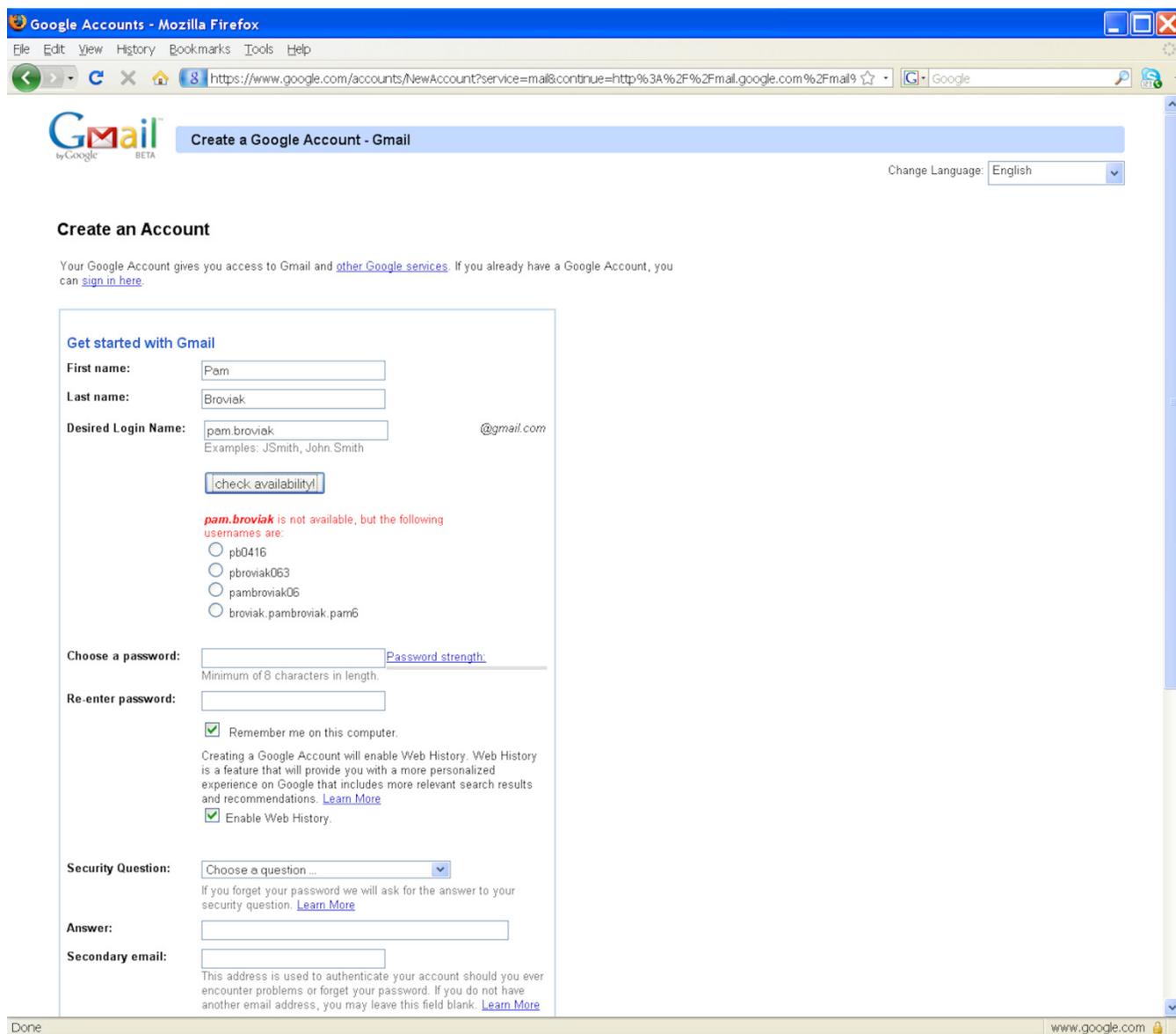


Click on the Gmail word at the top; go on, click it. This will be one of the least scary things we do. You should find yourself at the following screen.



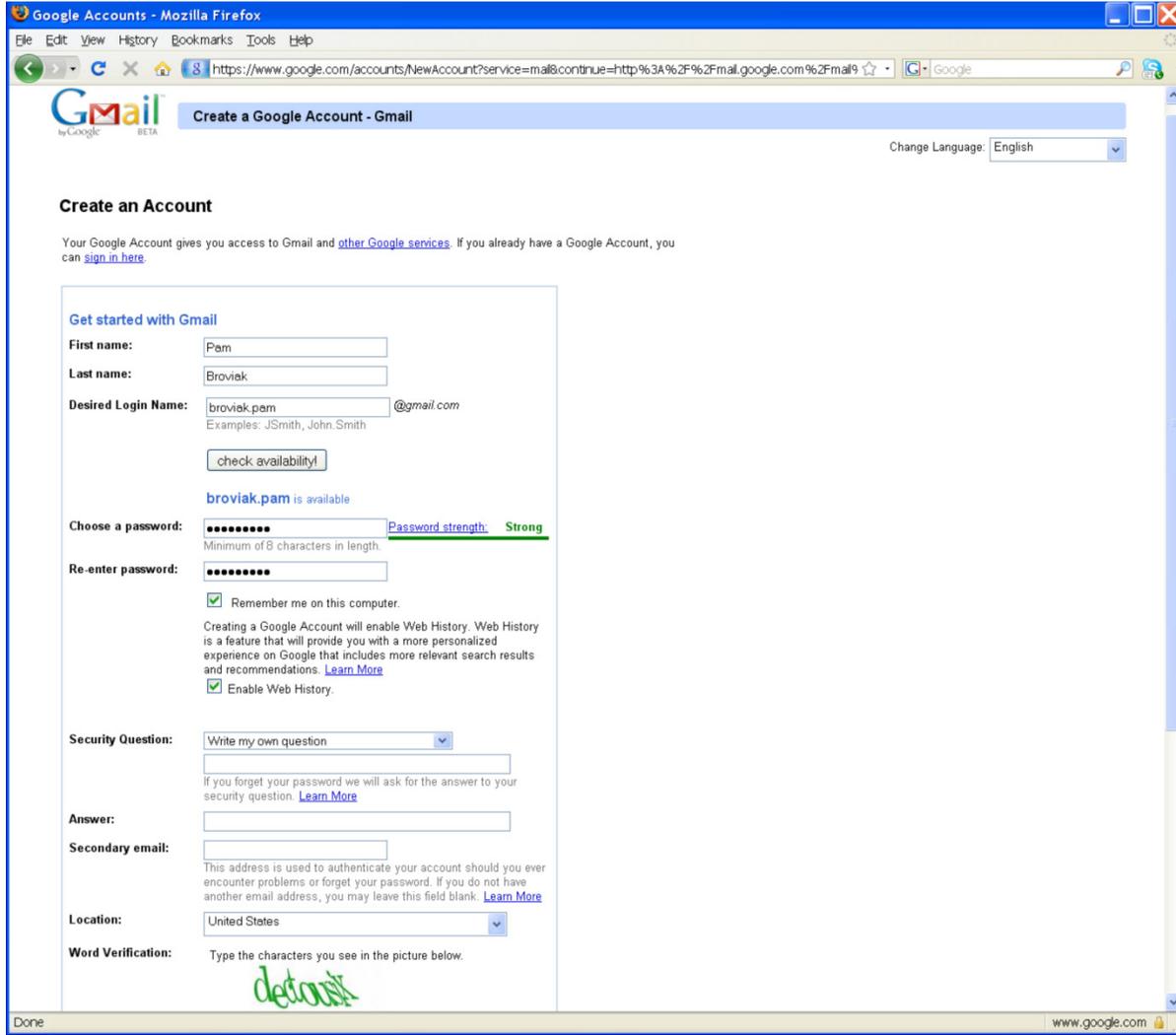
And if you were still a little hesitant about clicking over here, Google has put a happy picture of puppies on this site to help calm any apprehension you may have. They even named the puppies Sparky and Newton, the Gmail team dogs. There, now we are doing very well, and hopefully if you are visiting this screen at a different time of year, Google has made sure to place an equally happy picture here to greet you.

Now, we just need to find the link to sign up for our new Gmail account. And we find that the all knowing Google has placed this link for us in large letters on the right where it says, "Sign up for Gmail." Keeping in mind Sparky and Newton, the happy puppies, click this link. You will find yourself at the following screen:

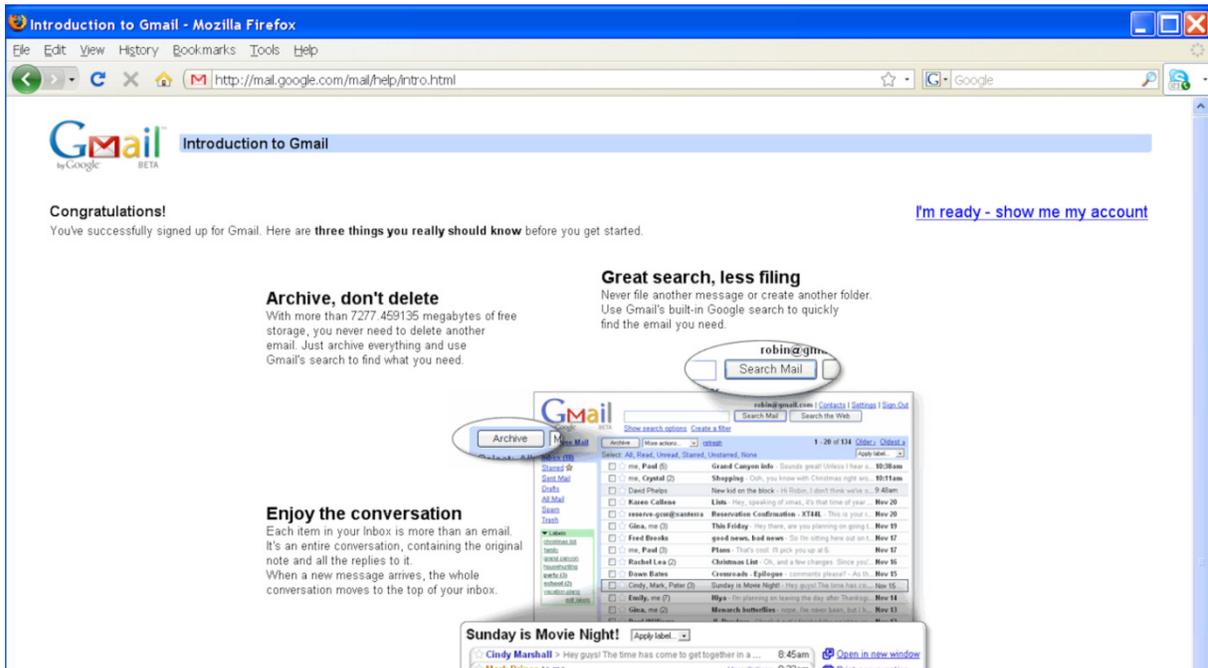


You will see that I have started filling in the form with my first and last name and the login name I have chosen. But alas, after checking the availability of “pam.broviak” by clicking the “check availability” button, this name is not available. Now you try; put in your first and last name. Then choose your login name remembering that now is not the time to try out that crazy nickname your friends would pick out. Most likely you will be using social media for work-related purposes, and names like eggplant or darth.vader are probably not wise choices for someone working in our field. Using your real name or a derivative of your real name is acceptable. If you are simply that fun type person that needs to have a little flair, using a safe, industry-related term like ready.mix , civile.dan, or pwmanager.dan would probably be ok too. Use your best judgment.

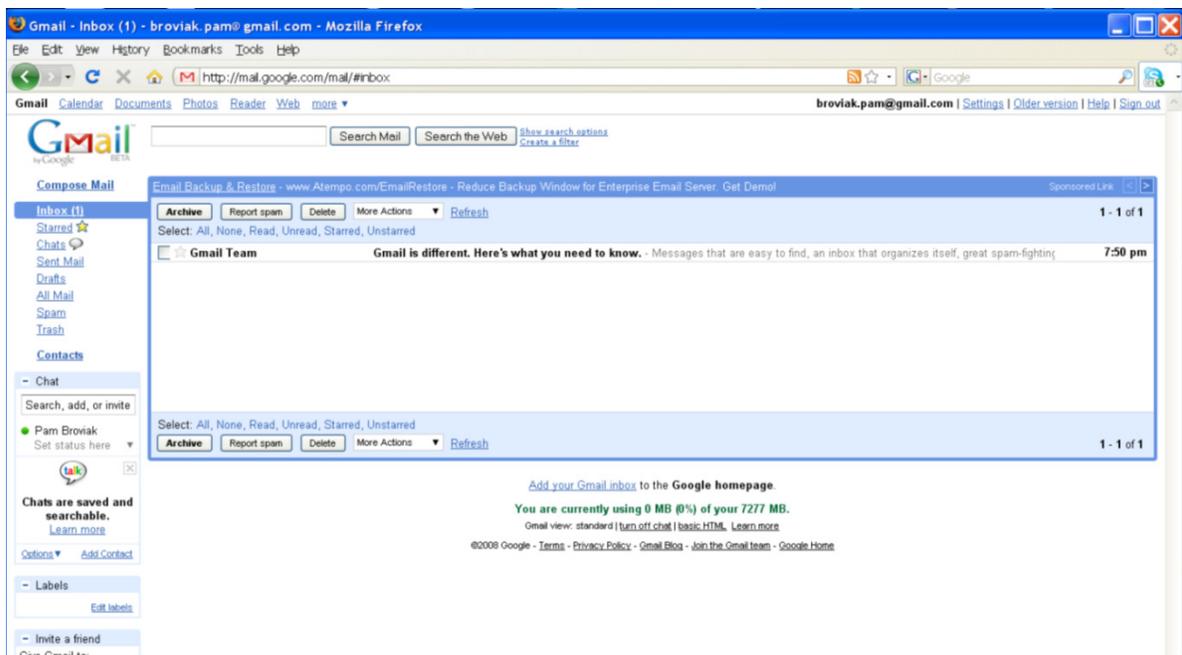
If you have chosen a name that is available, your screen should look something like this, except with your information instead of mine:



Finish filling out the form, and if you are successful, you should be taken to a screen that looks somewhat like the next screenshot:



Google tries to offer you a few last tips, and posts a link taking you directly to your new account. No happy puppies here, but with renewed confidence, click the link “I’m ready – show me my account,” and you will find yourself at your spanking, brand new Gmail page!



Yay! You have successfully completed the first task! Now you can either spend hours of fun and enjoyment getting to know your new Gmail page, or you can go on to our next assignment.

As we pause for a moment to bask in the glory of your first achievement, let's talk a little bit about passwords. As we continue down this path, entering new lands, you will be faced with the need to create passwords. You were asked to supply one above in order to get a Gmail account. Although using the same password for every site you ever register on might sound like a good idea because then you only have to remember one, should someone ever manage to figure out your password, they could get access to all your accounts.

BACK TO GOOGLE

Ready to go on? Your next quest is below:

POURING THE FOUNDATION

Web 2.0 is all about giving you the chance to personalize your Internet experience. To achieve this quest, you will make your own iGoogle page. This page will then serve as a home base for you and the Internet content we capture in later quests.

This time, you don't have to worry about what you put on your site. No one else can see how your iGoogle page is set up unless they are looking over your shoulder as you sit at your computer.

For this task, we are going to travel back to the main [Google](#) page. There you will again focus on the little words; in particular, the word "iGoogle." Click this, and you will be taken to a page that looks something like the image below:

PASSWORD TIPS & TRIVIA

Don't use common names or words

Don't use only letters or numbers

Don't use password or drowssap

Don't use the letter "a"

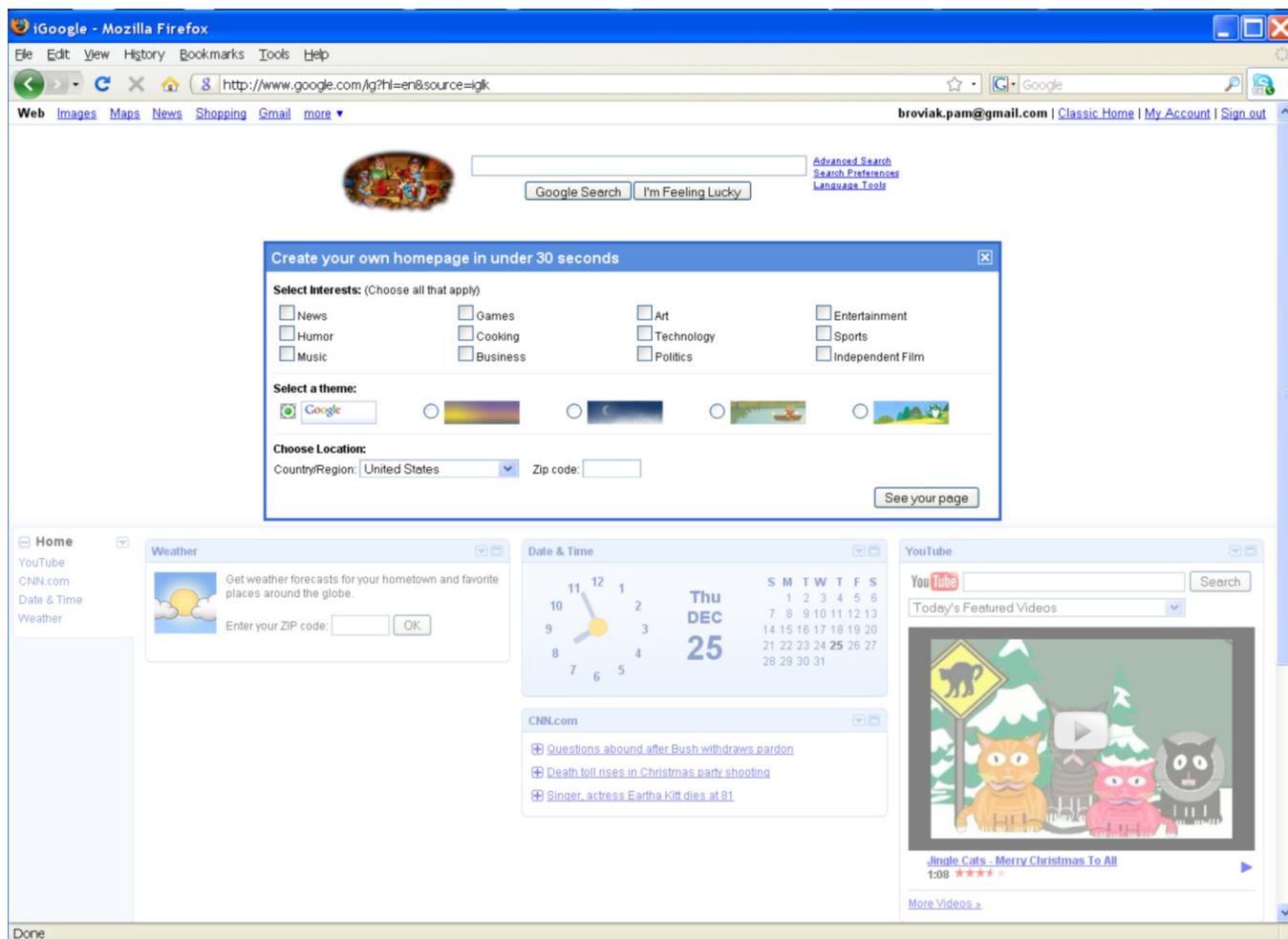
Don't tell anyone your password

Do change your password often

Do find a secure method of organizing your passwords

It takes two years for a hacker to figure out a password with these features:

- *More than eight characters in length*
- *Uses lower and upper case letters*
- *Uses numbers and keyboard characters*



Looking around the page, you will notice that Google has placed your new Gmail address at the top indicating that this iGoogle page is associated with this account. (If at any time you miss the “old Google look,” you can click the words to the right of your account name, “Classic Home,” and be taken back to a non-personalized page.)

At this point, Google is waiting for you to make some choices. In the center of the screen is a box with the encouraging words: “Create your own homepage in under 30 seconds.” See, everyone has at least 30 seconds to devote to making a special search page just for themselves. Go ahead and click in the boxes of topics in which you have an interest. For example, if want to keep up with the latest sports information, click the box in front of “Sports.” Then go on to select your theme. Don’t agonize too long over this one—later we will have the opportunity to choose from a wider selection. Indicating your location is important because Google will place a weather box on your page indicating your local weather. After you are finished, click the button with the words, “See your page.” Your new iGoogle site, made just for you, will be displayed. Here is how mine looked:



As you can see, Google took your interests and created boxes, or as Google calls them—gadgets, that feed information about that topic. This information will change on a regular basis. A clock and time box along with a YouTube box is placed by default. You can further customize your page by dragging the boxes around the page by hovering over the blue bars, waiting for the cursor to change to a four-way arrow, and clicking, dragging, and dropping each box to its new location. Kind of like moving furniture but without all the hassle. The drop down arrow in the upper right corner of each box offers additional options such as deleting, minimizing, or sharing the box, or gadget, with others.

ADVANCED INFORMATION FOR iGOOGLE USERS

Like many social media applications, Google allows for developers to create their own gadgets. The benefit from this is that you or someone in your IT department or an IT consultant can create a gadget for your company or agency that offers content for others to place on their iGoogle pages.

If you work for a city, perhaps you could follow the example of the city of Nanaimo and use a gadget to report Fire Incidents. Residents of the city of Lafayette in Louisiana can install a gadget showing traffic cameras and reports of traffic alerts. Libraries are creating gadgets to allow residents to search their catalogs.

Some ideas for gadgets related to public works could be combined sewer overflow reporting, emergency alerts, building permits issued, staff directories, public works-related tips for residents, basic regulations regarding burning, garbage pickup, or water billing.

Ideas for consulting firms, construction companies, or product manufacturers could be a picture of the day, newest design or product of the week, and innovative or sustainable design ideas.

You can spend even more quality time pimping your iGoogle page. Up at the top of the gadget section, in the lower right hand corner of the banner, you will find the link to change to other themes and the words “Add stuff.” Clicking the “Add stuff” link takes you to a site where you can choose from even more fun gadgets such as a Google Map search, a virtual aquarium, quotes of the day, and many more.

Now that you have your very own space on the Web made just for you, take your time to explore. Oh, and congratulations on completing the “Pouring the Foundation” quest!