

Chapter 1

Exploring the Benefits of Browser Customization

In This Chapter

- ▶ Simplifying a browser application
 - ▶ Targeting a special purpose or user
 - ▶ Installing the Browser Construction Kit
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You've probably used your favorite Web browser for a long time. Your browser is a trusted friend that accompanies you on your many treks through the complex world of the World Wide Web. You can't help but feel warm and fuzzy when you load your browser. (Geez, maybe we all should get out more.) After all, it provides the gateway to many cool adventures, from looking up the latest gossip on your favorite celebrity to more mundane tasks like research. Why on earth change something that works so well?

I can come up with plenty of reasons! Of course, not all of these reasons apply to you. Reasons for creating a custom Web browser are as varied as the people using them. You may just want to make the browser easier to use, or you may need a browser customized for a special purpose. Whatever your reasons, this book and its accompanying software are just the ticket. This chapter explains why you may want to build a customized Web browser.

Application Simplification

I bet that you have no clue what most of your Web browser's buttons and commands do. If you're like most people, you use a few buttons and commands all the time, and the rest sit there, waiting for you to figure them out — a task you and I both know you never get to. So why bother with that extra clutter on the screen, when you're not using it anyway?

Application simplification is the process of stripping out parts of a program that you don't need and may never use. Getting rid of that overhead makes your browser easier to use for a number of reasons:

- ✓ Fewer commands makes a browser less intimidating.
- ✓ Fewer commands also means that you work faster because you don't have dozens of commands to search through.
- ✓ Fewer controls leaves more screen room for the main display area.
- ✓ Fewer controls and commands may help the browser load faster.

Application simplification is automatic with the Browser Construction Kit. You start with only an empty window, as shown in Figure 1-1, and then add only the program elements you want. In this way, nothing extra clutters the browser's window or menus.



You may think that the browser customization process is difficult, but the first time you create your own browser, you'll be amazed at how easy the Browser Construction Kit is to use.



Figure 1-1:
The
stripped-
down
browser
window as it
appears in
the Browser
Construction
Kit's editor.

Special-Purpose Browsers

Most Web browsers target the general user. Because so many different types of people use browsers, the browser makers try to please everyone. This attempt yields browsers overloaded with features, most of which the average user never needs. Moreover, such browsers lack special features that a few

people may want. A *special-purpose browser* — the kind you can create with the Browser Construction Kit — boasts features not found in a conventional browser. A special-purpose browser, for example, can include features that prevent children from accessing unsuitable Web sites.

For more information on special browser features, refer to Part IV. In that part, you can read about timers, site-approval lists, locks, and other cool features.

Want an example? What if you want a kids' browser that disables surfing to unsavory Web sites? Or how about a browser that accesses a set of favorite sites with a button click (see Figure 1-2)? Maybe you have a small store, and you want a browser that accesses your catalog, but cannot go elsewhere on the Web. (Hey, you don't want your customers checking out the competition's Web site, do you?) Reasons for creating special-purpose Web browsers are more numerous than dust bunnies under my bed — and that's a lot of reasons!

Figure 1-2:
A Web browser with buttons that enable you quickly to select a favorite Web site.



Specific-Audience Browsers

A fine line divides special-purpose browsers from those targeting a specific audience. For example, a browser designed for children has both a special purpose and a specific audience, right? Yep. In fact, special-purpose and specific-audience browsers often have much in common. The difference is that, when I talk about special-purpose browsers, I'm referring to browser functionality. On the other hand, when I talk about *specific-audience browsers*, I'm referring to the way a browser looks. Specifically, I mean the types of graphics you use for buttons and other areas of the browser's window.

That special-audience browser for your hardware store looks better if it's designed with images related to hardware. As another example, suppose that you're crazy about gardening. (Hey, weirder things have happened.) Wouldn't it be cool to have a Web browser covered with garden-type images (see Figure 1-3)? I'd rather have bikini models, of course, but that's just me.



Figure 1-3:
A Web
browser for
the garden
enthusiast.

The Joy of Do-It-Yourself

Don't forget the most important thing about customizing a Web browser: It's fun! You like to build things, right? Who doesn't? (Okay, my crazy Uncle Satch would rather paint crickets, but that's another story.) Unlike that jigsaw puzzle of a black cat that's been sitting in your family room for the past three weeks, a custom Web browser is actually useful. That puzzle . . . well, you're just going to break it up and throw it back into the box.



To make a Web browser project even more stimulating and exciting, load up your favorite paint program (or use the one on this book's CD) and create custom images for your browser projects. Such images include borders, backgrounds, status bars, and even buttons, as shown in Figure 1-4. If your browser project was any more fun, it would be illegal!

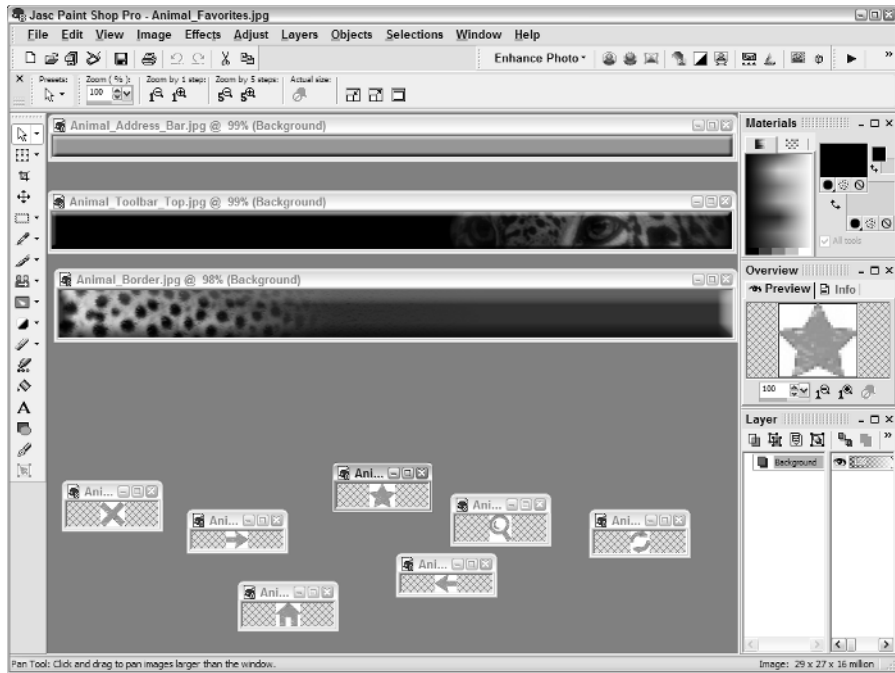


Figure 1-4:
Designing
button
graphics
with Paint
Shop Pro.



Don't go hog wild creating browser graphics just yet. You need to understand the types of images the Browser Construction Kit expects. Each type of image, for example, must be the correct size. Failure to follow the rules can lead to some very weird looking browsers! Check out Part III for more information.

Browser Construction Kit Installation



Before you can design your own Web browsers, you need to install the Browser Construction Kit, located on this book's CD-ROM. The Browser Construction Kit is a software package comprising a browser editor and a browser compiler. You design your browser using the WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editor and then run the browser with the browser compiler. You don't need to be a programmer to use the Browser Construction Kit, but if you're interested in that kind of thing, I wrote the software using Visual Basic .NET. All the software's source code is also on the CD.

Here's how to install the Browser Construction Kit:

1. **On this book's CD-ROM, find the Browser Construction Kit folder and open it.**
2. **Double-click the setup.exe file.**

The installer's Setup Wizard window appears, as shown in Figure 1-5.



Figure 1-5:
The
installer's
Setup
Wizard
window.

3. **Click the Next button to continue with the installation.**

The Select Installation Folder window appears (see Figure 1-6).

4. **Select the folder into which you want the Browser Construction Kit installed.**

Normally, you just leave the default folder selected.

5. **Select either the Everyone or Just Me button, depending on whether you want to install the program for every user on your system or just for you.**

6. **Click Next.**

The Confirm Installation window appears, as shown in Figure 1-7.

7. **Click Next to start the installation.**

The installer's window shows the installation's progress as it goes, as shown in Figure 1-8.

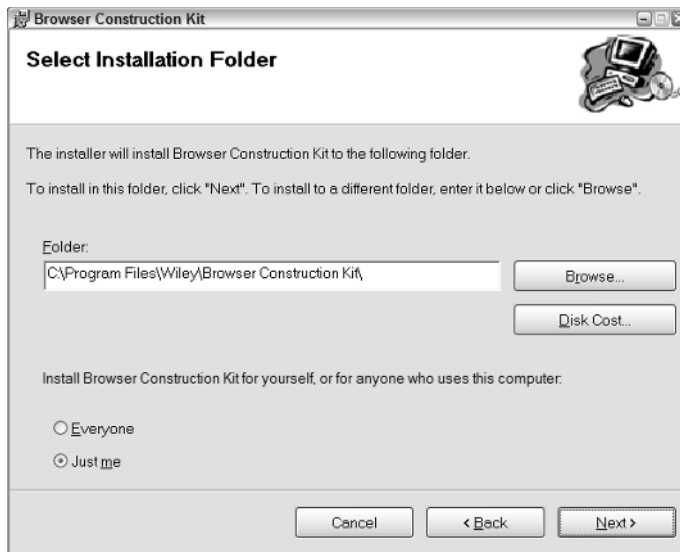


Figure 1-6:
The Select
Installation
Folder
window.

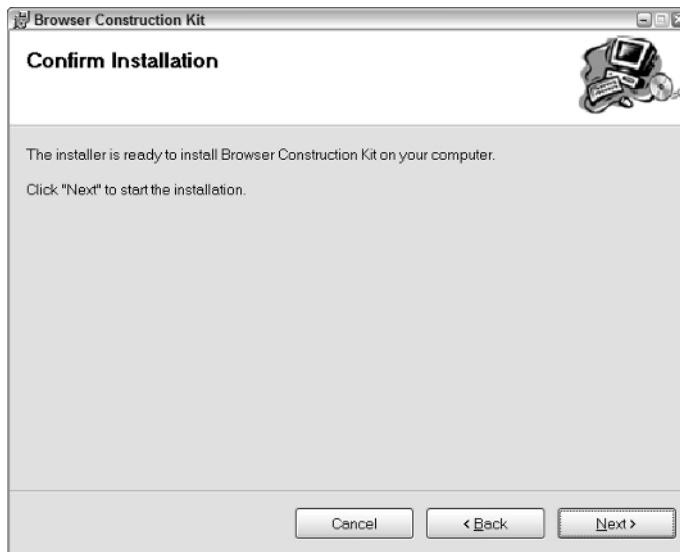


Figure 1-7:
The Confirm
Installation
dialog box.

When the installation finishes, the Installation Complete window appears, as shown in Figure 1-9.

8. Click Close to exit.

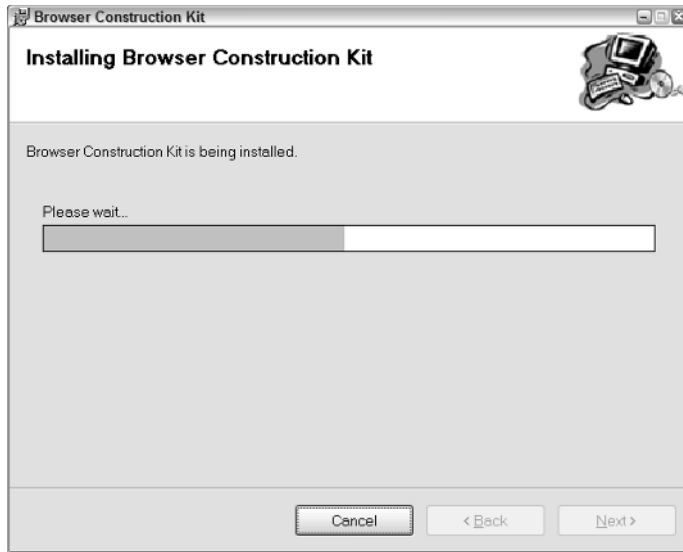


Figure 1-8:
The
installation
in progress.

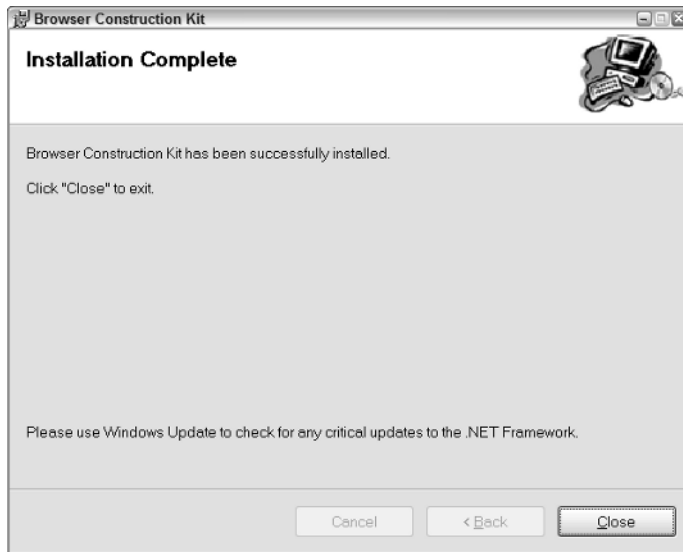


Figure 1-9:
The
Installation
Complete
window.



After installation, an icon for the Browser Construction Kit appears on your desktop. The application also appears on your Start menu. You run the program by double-clicking the icon on your desktop or by single-clicking the application on your Start menu.

Browser Construction Kit Removal

I just know that you'll love the Browser Construction Kit so much that you'll never want to remove it from your system. But, just in case, the application features a handy removal method that you can access from your Control Panel. Here's how:

1. **Go to your Start menu and choose Control Panel from the pop-up menu that appears, as shown in Figure 1-10.**

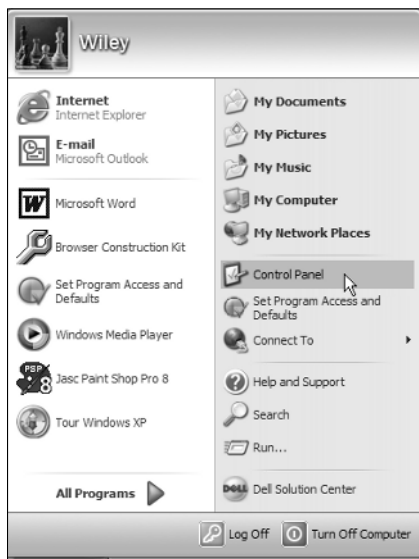


Figure 1-10:
Opening the
Control
Panel.

2. **In the Control Panel, click Add Or Remove Programs, as shown in Figure 1-11.**
3. **In the Currently Installed Programs list, click the Browser Construction Kit.**

The Change and Remove buttons appear.

4. **Click the Remove button (see Figure 1-12) and answer Yes when asked whether you're sure that you want to remove the program.**

Windows removes the Browser Construction Kit from your system.

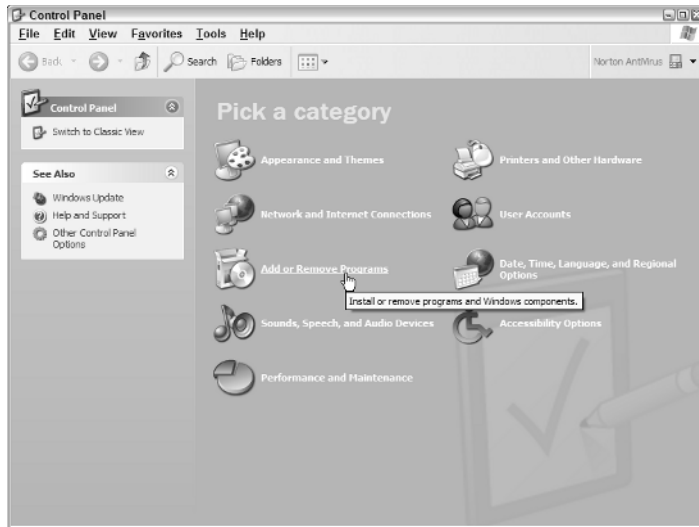


Figure 1-11:
Opening the
Add or
Remove
Programs
window.

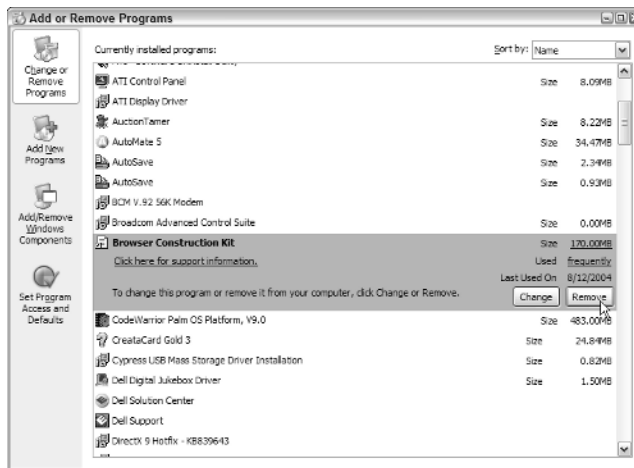


Figure 1-12:
Choosing to
remove the
application.

After Windows has removed the application from your computer, the program files, as well as the program's entries on your Start menu and your desktop will be gone. However, any files you created with the Browser Construction Kit — that is, files that didn't exist at the time of the installation — will still be on your computer. You can remove such files manually.