



learndirect scotland
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www.learndirectscotland.com

www.lds4centres.com

www.lds4b.com

www.lds4partners.com



SkillNet Technical Specifications





Skillnet Technical Specifications

This information will enable technical staff to adjust computer and network settings to enable learners to access the learningbytes courses available through the Skillnet learning management system, and will assist staff to ensure that learner activity is successfully tracked by the system.

Compatible operating system / browser combinations

Skillnet support has tested and recommends the following range of operating systems and browsers:

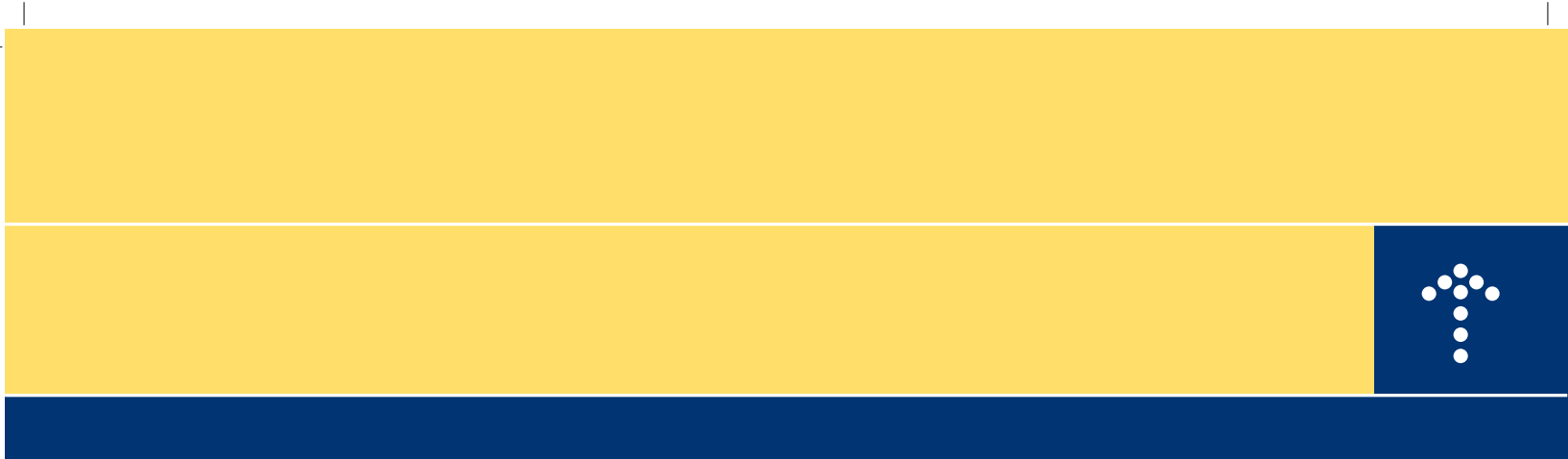
Operating system	Compatible Browsers
Windows 98 SE	Internet Explorer 5.0
Windows 2000 Professional	Internet Explorer 5.5 SP 2
Windows 2000 Professional	Internet Explorer 6.0
Windows XP	Internet Explorer 6.0
Windows 2000 Professional	Netscape 6.2.1
Mac PPC with O/S 9	Netscape 6.2

Firewall port requirements

For Skillnet to operate across the Internet, certain ports must be opened on any firewalls between the client computer and learndirect scotland's servers. These ports, and the reasons for them being opened, are listed below.

List of ports

25	This port is required for SMTP
80	This port is required for HTTP
3389	The SABA Client modules are hosted on the learndirect scotland servers. Access to these is achieved using Windows Terminal Services (WTS). WTS requires port 3389 to be opened.
10403	Part of the functionality of Skillnet is to allow chat and discussion groups. The chat facility requires port 10403 to be opened. If this functionality is not required, the port does not need to be opened.
1209	Third party content provided by Plato requires port 1209 to be opened.
5552/3/4	SABA Dialog is an additional function of Skillnet that requires ports 5552, 5553 and 5554 to be opened.
1494	The SABA Client modules are hosted on the learndirect scotland servers. Access to these can be achieved using Citrix. Citrix requires port 1494 to be opened.



Skillnet on the Internet

Idle session time

When a learner logs into Skillnet, he/she establishes a "session", with a unique "session key".

Each Skillnet session has one part running on the learner's workstation, in a browser, and a second part running on the Skillnet web application server.

When the browser and the server communicate, they use the session key to identify each other.

The Skillnet server is configured to remember the learner's session key and related information. The Skillnet server will keep the session alive for up to 120 minutes of inactivity – this means that if the server sees no Skillnet activity from the browser for 120 minutes, it will think that the learner has stopped and will end the session.

To enable the session details and related information to be remembered on the learner's browser, the learner must set the browser configuration to:

- enable all cookies
- enable JavaScript
- enable Java Virtual Machine.

All content is launched from a Skillnet web browser window, and once launched the learner interacts with the learning module – not with Skillnet. When the learner exits the learning module, the progress and score information is transferred to Skillnet. If the learner is in the module continuously for more than 120 minutes, the Skillnet session on the server will close. The browser window will still respond, but when it tries to communicate with the server, it will get no response, other than a request to log in to a new session. When the learner logs in again to Skillnet, there will be no evidence of the learner's progress throughout the previously terminated session. To the learner, Skillnet has not tracked progress through the module.

The time that the server will keep the session alive can be varied, but server resources are consumed. **To ensure progress and scores are tracked, the learner should exit the module before the server session becomes inactive.** Doing this at 90 minute intervals is recommended based on standard settings. Re-entering the module will effectively "reset the clock" on the session.

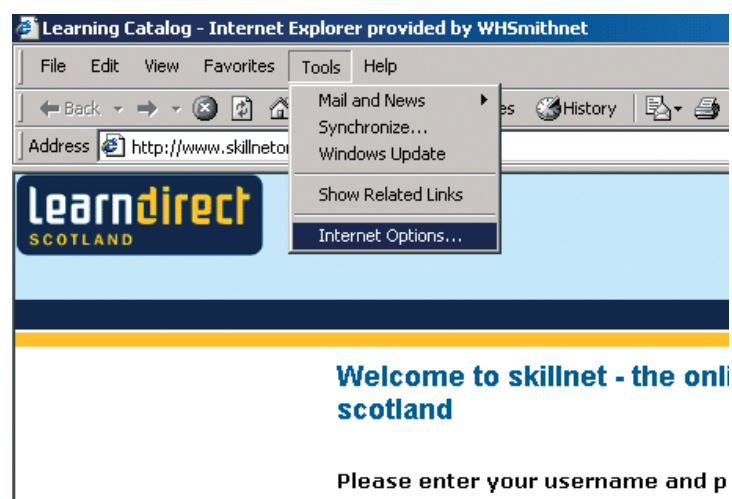
Pop-up blockers

Because content in Skillnet is launched in a separate browser window, pop-up blockers detect this as a pop-up and will prevent the content from launching, so pop-up blockers must be disabled when using Skillnet.

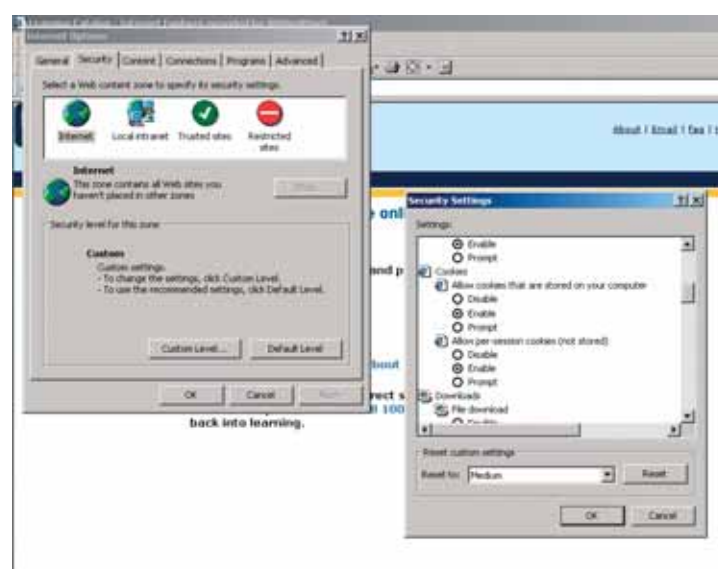
Configuring the browser settings

Internet Explorer 5.5 SP 2 and older

Cookies must be enabled. To check this, from your browser go to Tools/Internet options:



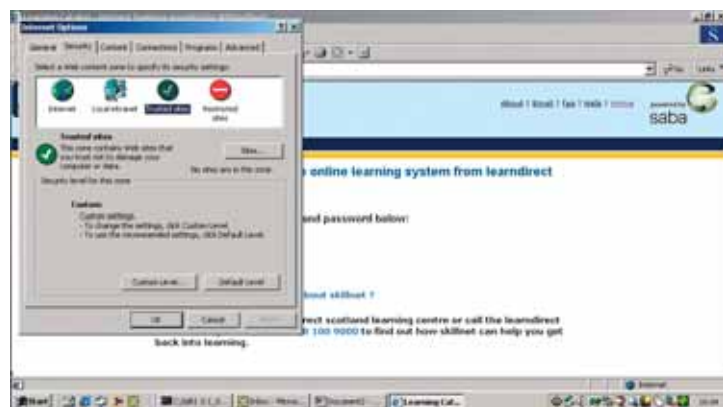
From the Security tab click on Custom Levels and scroll down to Cookies and make sure both options are enabled:



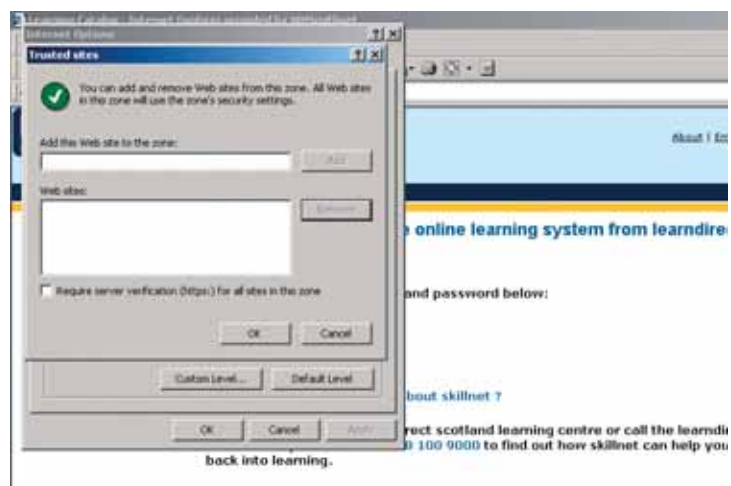


Internet Explorer 6

You must make your Skillnet website a trusted website. To do this open Internet options as above.



Highlight Trusted sites and click on the sites button.

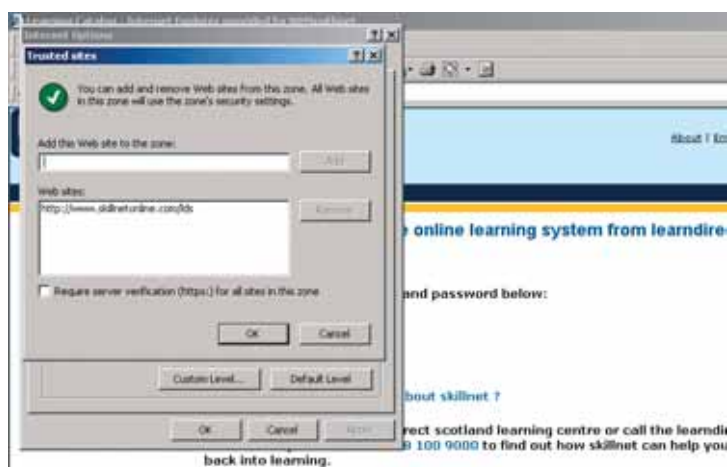


Ensure that "Requires server verification (https) for all sites in this zone" is unchecked and type the url for your Skillnet website e.g. <http://vlc.skillnetonline.com/sufi>



SkillNet Technical Specifications

In the top box and then click on Add.

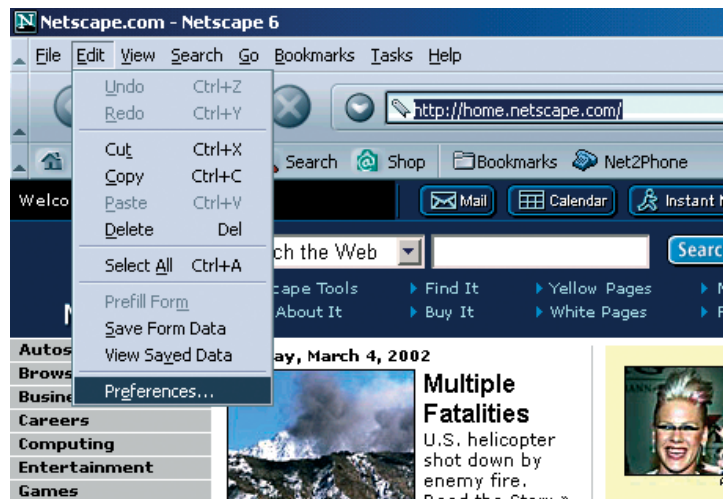


When you have finished click on OK.



Netscape 6.2.1

Again, cookies have to be enabled. To check go to Edit/Preferences



On the Preferences page select Cookies from the Privacy & Security menu and ensure that "Enable all cookies" is selected.



SkillNet Technical Specifications

Configuring the network connection

Many network connections, especially in learndirect scotland learning centres, are "always on" - there is a permanent connection. This should provide no problem.

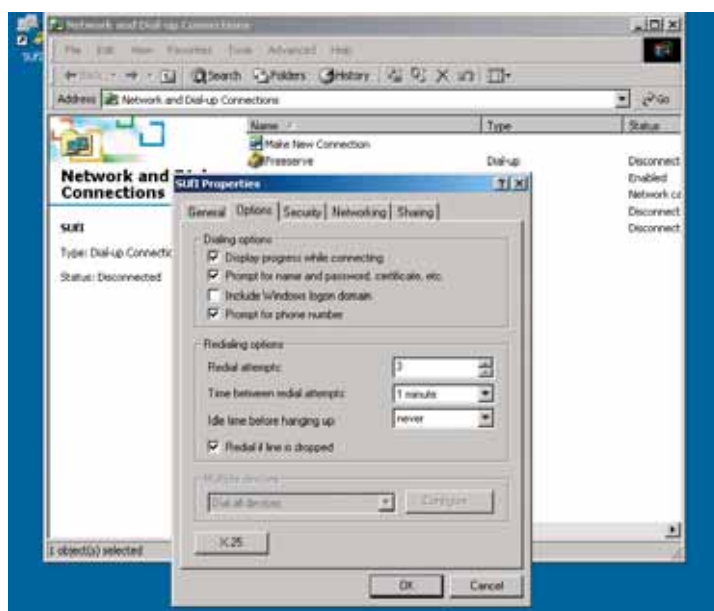
However, many home connections will use dial-up to access an Internet Service Provider (ISP).

ISPs often monitor connection activity in this way and breaking the connection between the learner and the ISP. If ignored, this situation will lead a Skillnet session closing.

To guard against losing a Skillnet session, the following settings should be configured for the dial-up connection:

- redial attempt - 3
- time between redial attempts - 1 minute
- idle time before hanging up - never
- redial if line is dropped - checked

The last two settings above are the most important. These settings can be found from the Options tab of the Properties page for your dial-up connection.





Plug-ins required

Some content will require additional software to operate properly. These "plug-ins" can usually be downloaded free of charge from the software developer's website. In most cases, the content will prompt this operation. The following table describes the known plug-ins required for the sectorsolutions material as of January 2005.

Content	Minimum requirements
Concepts of Construction	Shockwave 8 plus Xtras
Sheep Production	Flash 6
Crop Protection	Flash 6
Financial Management	Flash 6
Gaelic for Arts & Festivals	Flash 6, Shockwave 8 plus Xtras
Gaelic for Food Services	Flash 6, Shockwave 8 plus Xtras
Gaelic for Managers	Flash 6, Shockwave 8 plus Xtras
Gaelic for Marketing	Flash 6, Shockwave 8 plus Xtras
Gaelic for Outdoor Workers	Flash 6, Shockwave 8 plus Xtras
Gaelic for Parents	Flash 6, Shockwave 8 plus Xtras
Gaelic for Receptionist	Flash 6, Shockwave 8 plus Xtras
Gaelic for Travel Workers	Flash 6, Shockwave 8 plus Xtras
Gaelic for Retail Workers	Flash 6, Shockwave 8 plus Xtras
Gaelic for TIC Workers	Flash 6, Shockwave 8 plus Xtras
Learning2Learn	Authorware 7

Full details and links to plug-in download sites for content in the sectorsolutions catalogue can be found at www.lds4centres.com

In all cases, we recommend content testing on every computer that will be used to run it, to ensure all appropriate plug-ins are installed before allowing learners to access the content.



SkillNet Technical Specifications

Notes

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Notes

