

How to find the Internet Explorer binary

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For some reason, some people go to enormous lengths to locate the Internet Explorer binary so they can launch it with some options.

The way to do this is not to do it.

If you just pass “IEXPLORE.EXE” to the ShellExecute function [link fixed 9:41am], it will go find Internet Explorer and run it.

```
ShellExecute(NULL, "open", "iexplore.exe",  
             "http://www.microsoft.com", NULL,  
             SW_SHOWNORMAL);
```

The ShellExecute function gets its hands dirty so you don't have to.

(Note: If you just want to launch the URL generically, you should use

```
ShellExecute(NULL, "open", "http://www.microsoft.com",  
             NULL, NULL, SW_SHOWNORMAL);
```

so that the web page opens in the user's preferred web browser. Forcing Internet Explorer should be avoided under normal circumstances; we are forcing it here because the action is presumably being taken response to an explicit request to open the web page specifically in Internet Explorer.)

If you want to get your hands dirty, you can of course do it yourself. It involves reading the specification from the other side, this time the specification on how to register your program's name and path (“Registering Application Path Information”).

The document describes how a program should enter its properties into the registry so that the shell can launch it. To read it backwards, then, interpret this as a list of properties you (the launcher) need to **read from** the registry.

In this case, the way to run Internet Explorer (or any other program) the same way ShellExecute does is to look in

```
HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\App
```

Paths\IEXPLORE.EXE (substituting the name of the program if it's not Internet Explorer you're after). The default value is the full path to the program and the the "Path" value specifies a custom path that you should prepend to the environment before launching the target program.

When you do this, **don't forget** to call the ExpandEnvironmentStrings function if the registry value's type is `REG_EXPAND_SZ` . (Lots of people forget about `REG_EXPAND_SZ` .)

Of course, my opinion is that it's much easier just to let ShellExecute do the work for you.

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