



## NetEscape

aka Jimmy the fish vs Billy the virus  
<http://play.at/net-escape>



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**NetEscape** is an online game specifically designed for Netscape Communicator 4.0+. It requires a VRML 97 plug-in such as Cosmo Player 2.0 from Cosmosoftware. This plug-in is included in the standard distribution of Netscape Navigator 4.0+ for Win95/NT.

### The story behind **NetEscape**

Not long ago, not far away, Jimmy plied the deep waters of infosea. Happy times. Jimmy swam freely, exploring different data and feeding on links

Occasionally, other creatures would try to eat Jimmy. But they soon gave up and Jimmy would celebrate his escape with a loud "yahoo!". Survival in infosea depended on being quick and alert.

And that's exactly what Jimmy was.

But soon a new threat emerged, a danger more severe than a power outage. It was a virus and its name was Billy. The virus had only one goal - take over infosea. Billy gave the other creatures two choices, surrender or die.

### The present

Billy the virus has almost succeeded. Most creatures are dead or infected. Jimmy has survived the onslaught so far, but is weak and close to surrender. Will you help him?

How?

Feed Jimmy with links. You can find them everywhere in infosea. The more you find, the stronger Jimmy will be, the more likely he will escape the virus. Find enough links and Jimmy will escape the deadly Billy forever...

## Rules of the game

The rules of **NetEscape** are simple. After the game has started you have to surf the Internet by following hyperlinks in the browser window. *You are only allowed to follow hyperlinks.* Do not attempt to submit a search request or use an html form to escape, this will end the game. Whenever the page is *completely loaded*, the total number of points will be added to your score. If you follow a hyperlink before the page is loaded you will receive a time penalty. *You are also not allowed to revisit a page.* Any page revisit will result in a time penalty and will make Billy stronger. Occasional skirmishes will occur between Billy and Jimmy, depending on your score and number of penalties incurred. If you are too slow or receive too many penalties, Billy succeeds, and Jimmy will be trapped in a cage; a fate worse than deletion.

That's it.

## One word about frames

In order to make the game more challenging, frame content is not loaded into the frame it was intended for. Instead, **NetEscape** loads the frame content into the top window. All we can say is: *stay away from sites with menuframes!*

## Game layout

The game screen is divided into four different areas as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. **NetEscape** game layout

1. **Browser area:** this is the area where you collect links. The window has no menu or button bar, it is completely integrated into the game screen. Be aware that if you follow a link within a frame, the game will load the frame content into the top window.
2. **Jimmy's world:** in this world you experience the escape of Jimmy first hand. It is a completely virtual world. You can use the navigational tools provided by the VRML plug-in for exploring Jimmy's neighborhood.
3. **History area:** this window shows you the current game status as well as the last five visited links with the number of points earned at each link.
4. **Highscore area:** what would a game be without a highscore? Try to beat the current highscore stored by the **NetEscape** server. The highscores are continuously updated so that you can always compare your results to the **NetEscape** pros.

### Some technical details

**NetEscape** utilizes a unique combination of various state of the art Internet technologies including Java applets, JavaScript, LiveConnect, VRML 97 and its External Authoring Interface (EAI). In a nutshell, **NetEscape** works as follows.

The game interface consists of two different browser windows. One of them contains Jimmy's world, a Java applet containing the history and highscore areas and an inline JavaScript that is responsible for the communication between the different browser plug-ins. A second window contains the browser area. In order to make these windows borderless, applet and JavaScript have to bypass Netscape's security rules. Therefore, both are digitally signed and ask for additional browser privileges upon game start.

Whenever a new page is loaded into the browser window the JavaScript in the game window captures the load, click and unload events of the new document. When the page is loaded completely, it counts the number of links and reports this result to the game applet. The applet on the other hand is connected to the VRML plug-in via VRML's External Authoring Interface (EAI). It takes the score reported from the JavaScript and passes it on to the VRML file describing Jimmy's world. All game dependent decisions are then made within a Script node of the VRML world.

If Billy succeeds, the VRML file "Game Over" event is sent back to the applet that in return notifies the JavaScript to unload the game. If the score is within the highscore range it additionally opens a network connection to the **NetEscape** highscore server and uploads the new highscore.

All pretty easy, actually.

## System requirements

**Hardware:** IBM compatible PC, Pentium 75 MHz or higher, 16 MB RAM or higher

**Software:** Windows 95 or NT 4.0, Netscape Communicator 4.04+ for Win95/NT, ComsoPlayer 2.0 VRML plug-in (included in Netscape 4.04+ for Win95/NT)

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## Acknowledgements

**NetEscape** is part of the Geometrek collection, a unique repository of non-commercial virtual games, puzzles, objects and worlds.

## References

1. Cosmosoftware homepage, <http://cosmosoftware.com>
2. Geometrek online repository, <http://play.at/geometrek>
3. Netscape download page, <http://home.netscape.com/download/>
4. VRML repository, <http://www.sdsc.edu/vrml>

## 10 reasons why someone would like to play NetEscape

10. "I need a reason to surf the 'net.'"
9. "I am from cyberspace. Surfing is my life!"
8. "I lost the TV remote and feel the urge to press something."
7. "I am an environmentalist. Save and backup everything!"
6. "What? This is a game?"
5. "I need to exercise my mouse. It's lazy."
4. "I am Jim Clark, founder of Netscape. I enjoy playing with a game that requires Netscape Communicator."
3. "I am Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft. I enjoy playing with a game that requires Netscape Communicator."
2. "I am Bill Clinton, leader of America. I enjoy playing with anything."
1. "Some bastard beat my highscore!"