

Best Web browser? Google's Chrome beats Firefox, Safari and Internet Explorer

April 7 2011, By Mark W. Smith

There is no computer program used as often as a Web browser. Yet too many users never give the browser any thought, spending years with the default program installed on a once-new computer.

But users have options, some of which could open up the Web in a whole new way.

Each browser has its own list of features and some run faster than others, making the choice paramount to any frequent surfer.

It's a competitive time in the browser field, too, with both Microsoft's Internet Explorer and Mozilla's [Firefox](#) releasing new versions in the past few weeks.

So, with these two new top contenders, there hasn't been a better time to take a step back and decide which browser is best for you and your computer.

We'll help you out by taking a look at the top four browsers on the Web.

INTERNET EXPLORER 9

The Web's most used - and most beleaguered - browser sees a huge upgrade with Internet Explorer 9.

Long derided for being slow and clunky, IE 9 comes with a new, sleeker look and superfast performance.

And, in the most welcome change, IE 9 takes a design cue from Google Chrome that helps the browser fade into the background a bit. The new browser nests open tabs next to the address bar, so there is less wasted space.

Overall, I was pleasantly stunned by IE 9. It's been years since IE was worth anything but scorn, but this is definitely worth a look.

A wide adoption of IE 9 will be slowed considerably by its requirement of either Windows 7 or Vista, which many Web browsers don't have.

MOZILLA FIREFOX 4

Mozilla Firefox has long been the burgeoning underdog of Web browsers. But it's grown steadily, chipping away at IE's monster market share.

On its way, it built a loyal following of devotees, eager to shed the weight common in IE - the default browser installed on Windows PCs.

Much of the power of the Firefox browser lies in the add-ons available from third-party developers. These can allow users to do things like block Web ads, download videos from websites or integrate social media sites into their browsing.

Firefox 4 brings a new feature called app tabs that allow users to pin frequently visited sites - email, Facebook, etc. - to the top left of the browser so they're always available.

It also brings Firefox Sync, which allows users to keep bookmarks and

Web history the same across machines.

GOOGLE CHROME 10

Just more than 2 years old, Google Chrome is the new kid on the block.

But it has seen its [market share](#) climb steadily to more than 17 percent in those two years, taking users from IE and Firefox along the way.

Chrome's power is in its simplicity. The browser window itself carries very little weight, with just enough room for the address bar and your tabs.

It introduced the time-saving Omnibox, which merges the search and address bar into one box. Just type in a Google search or full Web address and the browser will know what you're doing.

Chrome also allows users to sync bookmarks across computers.

APPLE SAFARI 5

Until 2003, Apple computers relied on Microsoft's Internet Explorer as the default browser. But then Apple decided to make one of its own.

The Safari browser was Mac-only at launch, but a Windows version was released in 2007, opening it up to the largest chunk of the computing world.

Safari's hallmark is its brushed aluminum finish and it includes a nice looking home screen that shows your most-visited sites in a thumbnail gallery.

Safari 5 includes a feature called Safari Reader that simplifies the view of any article to strip out content like ads.

Safari, though, lacks a must-have feature to give Chrome or Firefox users a reason to check it out.

SPEED TESTS

My speed tests were completed on a 64-bit Dell Latitude E6410 laptop with a 2.8-GHz Intel Core i7 processor and 8 GB of RAM running Windows 7.

For the first test, I used Peacemaker, a popular Web benchmarking tool that runs browsers through a series of automated tasks and grades them on their speed.

The Peacekeeper test doesn't depend on your Internet connection speed; it just measures how fast the browser performs certain tasks.

The clear winner here was Google Chrome 10, which scored 8,738 points - a figure that only serves to compare it against other browsers on the same machine.

The other three browsers had similar, but smaller scores with Firefox 4 at 4,973, IE 9 at 4,897 and Safari 5 at 4,652.

I also ran the browsers through the SunSpider JavaScript benchmark - another Web tool to measure browser speed that uses a different set of tasks.

Here, IE 9 was the winner, completing the test in 179.8 milliseconds. The other three browsers were close behind, but Safari finished last at 285.6 milliseconds.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Each browser has its own quirks and download-worthy features.

For your default browser, there isn't a better option than Chrome. With its speed and simplicity, Chrome is the best at fading away - the true test of a great browser.

But picking a browser doesn't mean you can't have several at your disposal. If a website doesn't load correctly in one, a switch to another will often fix the issue.

Take the time now to pick a faster browser. And spend those new milliseconds wisely.

THE TOP BROWSERS

- Microsoft [Internet Explorer 9](#)

Key features: Streamlined look, faster performance and HTML5 support

System requirements: PC running Microsoft 7 or Vista

To download: beautyoftheweb.com

- Mozilla Firefox 4

Key features: New app tabs, new tab grouping feature and Firefox Sync integration

System requirements: PC running Windows 2000 or later; Mac running OS 10.5 or later

To download: mozilla.com

- [Google Chrome](#) 10

Key features: Simple look, Omnibox, bookmark syncing

System requirements: PC running Windows XP or later; Mac running OS 10.5.6 or later

To download: [google.com/chrome](#)

- Apple Safari 5

Key features: [Safari](#) Reader, most-visited sites gallery and HTML5 support

System requirements: PC running Windows XP or later; Mac running OS 10.5.8 or later

To download: [apple.com/safari](#)

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