

Browser Bulletin: Internet Explorer is OUT

If you're still using Internet Explorer (IE), Stop it.

This was the gist of a clear, strong message directly from Microsoft in a news post published and updated recently. (<https://techcommunity.microsoft.com/t5/Windows-IT-Pro-Blog/The-perils-of-using-Internet-Explorer-as-your-default-browser/ba-p/331732>) Microsoft plans to end support for their long standing browser Internet Explorer on January 14, 2020 and since January 12, 2016, only version 11 of IE has been supported.

Entitled "The perils of using Internet Explorer as your default browser," the post details Microsoft's position on its support for the browser, pointing out that entities with policies such as "only works on IE" incur technical debt. Technical Debt is the collection of implied costs of additional work caused by stagnation: using what you already have in place, instead of changing to a better, long-term solution.

"Wait, back up... What's Internet Explorer again? And what exactly is a browser?"

Perhaps you are already well versed in internet tech jargon and even understand it. But if you're not one of those people, upon hearing the term "browser" or anything like it your brain might start imagining puppies and flowers, and

you just smile and nod. A browser is often confused with "the internet" itself, or conversely your "operating system." Why? When it does its job well, it is very much in the background, an invisible portal to the world wide web. The job of a browser is to use the URL or link from your search results to find the files from a website you want to view,

"Internet Explorer is a compatibility solution. We're not supporting new web standards for it and, while many sites work fine, developers by and large just aren't testing for Internet Explorer these days. They're testing on modern browsers. "

Microsoft

then render all of that code into a nice display, regardless of what device, screen size, software programs, etc. you are using.

Websites can take information from different places, so your browser must gather these pieces of data and display it into one page as the author intended. Different sites use different coding languages to accomplish the functionality they are serving up, so browsers also must be able to interpret what the server sends. Websites have been created over many years, so browsers must also be able to correctly display older versions of pages as well as the latest and greatest. With so many moving parts, your browser, which is the last and only thing you see, has to be the most current, most nimble piece of software on your device. It has to maintain compatibility with all industry changes happening outside of its own developers. When your "internet breaks," it's likely not the browser breaking; it's likely new code or new functionality released that the browser developers haven't caught up with yet. Knowing this, it's important to keep your browser updated. In fact, there is nothing wrong with allowing automatic updates of your browser software so that you don't have to worry about



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doing it manually. (You might note, the update of your browser is not necessarily related to your operating system updates in the short term, so it works fine to keep those separated if you wish.)

How does this actually affect me then?

So, we know that the best browser software is constantly looking at the industry to remain current. If your choice of browser software is not being supported by its developers anymore, you will begin to experience problems. Likewise, if you do not update your browser that is supported by its developers, you will begin to experience problems. In an effort to save money, often RWDs and systems have older versions of software.

However, in the case of your browser, for the most part they are free. Here are some of the best choices out there right now, all free, all downloadable or available in app store:

Google Chrome <https://www.google.com/chrome/>

Chrome literally writes the book for how browsers work and what functionality they will accommodate. From the user standpoint, Chrome is easy to use, accommodates other Google products, and is the most compatible for any device. If you're thinking of switching to Chrome, take advantage of their "sign in" feature. If you create a profile, it saves your preferences and bookmarks, which means you have access to your favorite setup from any device.

Safari <https://support.apple.com/downloads/safari>

This Apple product is the default browser for iPhones, and is widely popular on Macs as well. Touting some built in security features, this stable, highly compatible browser has gained popularity as it has kept up with the industry and customers since 2003.

Mozilla Firefox <https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/>

This browser is widely compatible and runs on the most common web standards. While not a standard, pre-installed solution for any particular device, this solution runs brilliantly on Linux, Windows, Mac, Android, and others.

Microsoft Edge <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/microsoft-edge-mobile>

This is now the default browser for Windows, the replacement for IE. (Speaking of Internet Explorer, to its credit, it was once the most widely used web browser,



attaining a peak of about 95 percent of users in 2003.) MS stated that it built Edge to Google Chrome's backend web standards. This means, although at one time IE did not play nice with others, Edge certainly has the potential to be a safe bet.

Opera <https://www.opera.com/>

This Chinese owned browser is popular with Mac operating systems, and is also compatible with iPhones, Androids, Windows desktops and Linux. While not a front runner, its initial release date of 1995 indicates its stability and constant presence in the ever changing browser market.

August 2019 Browser Popularity

In the graphic above the monthly market trend is displayed, (<https://www.w3counter.com/globalstats.php>).

What should I do now?

If you are a staunch IE user, go ahead and keep it on your computer, but start transitioning as soon as possible to a different browser. You can try out a few, then once you find one you like, start moving bookmarks and personal preferences to the new browser. Few people embrace change when it's initiated from someone else, but it is best to make this change now rather than later when websites "stop working" and you find yourself in a hurry to switch.

Since 1997, Jen Sharp (JenSharp.com) has served business and government across Kansas and the US and even internationally, specializing in Web development, design & programming including e-Learning, ecommerce, content management systems, and other small business solutions.

