

3 common browser misconceptions explained

1. A browser is a search provider

When asked what a browser is, many people start rattling of names like Google, Bing and Yahoo. While Google does make a browser called Chrome, most people mean Google search.

It's an understandable mistake. In most cases, browsing and searching are similar activities.

In the digital sense, however, they are two very different things. **A search provider is a company with a website.** When you search, all your activity is done on that one site.

Confusion alert: Most browsers do have a built-in search feature. However, this just links to one of the major online search providers. It's a slightly faster way of visiting the provider's site and performing a search.

A browser, on the other hands, is the program you use to access the entire Internet. You can access search providers, and millions of other sites as well.

Think of your browser like a TV and websites like channels. If someone asks you what kind of TV you have, you would say Sony or Samsung, not Discovery or Disney.

I should probably mention that the same principle applies for email. Some people refer to browsers and email like they are the same thing.

Again, if you use webmail, such as Gmail, Yahoo!, Hotmail or something else, you can access it with a browser. There are also dedicated email programs, like Outlook or [Thunderbird](#). However, these aren't browsers.

The same goes for social media such as Facebook and Twitter, naturally.

So, what programs are browsers? There are only a few major browsers around and you probably know the names: Internet Explorer, Safari, [Chrome](#), [Firefox](#) and [Opera](#).

That leads us to the second misconception.

2. Web browsers are all the same

A browser is very transparent technology. Its entire purpose is to help you see other things.

For the most part you don't really think about your browser; you just use it. That's how technology should be!

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Of course, at some point you do need to think about your browser. Just like older TVs can't display the newest movies and shows correctly, older browsers have trouble with newer Web standards, like HTML5. That means you aren't seeing newer websites the way you should.

Then there's the security issue. Unlike TVs and other home appliances, your browser is a doorway to your computer, which contains a lot of personal information.

If a hacker can get you to click on the wrong thing, your personal information is theirs. Obviously, you want security software installed as defense.

However, an up-to-date browser is also a great defense. It has security features that older browsers don't have, like sandboxing and integration with Windows' latest security systems.

So, for those running Internet Explorer 6, 7 or 8, Firefox 3, or older versions of Chrome, it's time to upgrade. If you don't know what version of your browser you're using, it's usually under Help>>About. You can also [visit this website](#).

Fortunately, newer browsers can check to see if they're the latest version and keep you up to date automatically.

It makes sense that a newer version of a browser is better than an older version, but is one browser better than another? For example, Windows and OS X come with Internet Explorer and Safari installed by default. Is there any reason to go download and install Firefox, Chrome or Opera.

If you're running Windows XP, the answer is a resounding YES! XP can't run any IE version newer than 8, and IE8 is terrible at browsing speed and security.

If you're still using IE8, I strongly recommend you switch to another browser. All the latest versions of the other browsers will work in XP.

For those running Windows Vista, 7, 8 or Mac OS X, the difference between browsers isn't so great. If you have the latest version of your browser, they're all similar in performance and security. However, they do have different focuses.

The best part is that they're all free, so you can download and test them out. In fact, you might end up using multiple browsers to deal with multiple tasks.

Firefox is great for people who love to have lots of tabs open at once and like to customize their experience with add-ons. Chrome is geared toward speed and staying out of the way. Opera is a solid all-around browser for speed and features, plus it works the same on every gadget.

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And that brings us to the final misconception.

3. Web browsers are only for computers

Well, maybe that should be "Web browser choices are only for computers." I'm sure you know that your both tablet and smartphone have a browser. For iOS it's a mobile version of Safari. Android uses a generic Android browser, while Windows RT and 8 have Internet Explorer 10.

On the whole, the default mobile browsers are less than stellar. Fortunately, there are plenty of third-party alternatives that improve speed, security and features.

For example, there's a mobile version of Opera called [Opera Mini](#) that is very popular. Google makes a mobile version of [Chrome](#) as well.

Then there are browsers that aren't from one of the major companies. [Dolphin](#) is a great Android alternative. There are even browsers like [BSecure](#) that offer content filtering for kids.

Again, these browsers are mostly free, so you can try them out and see which ones you like best.

This isn't all the information there is about browsers. Here are some more things you should know.

- Bookmarking websites is a great way to save them for later reading. [Sync your bookmarks between all your browsers with this handy program.](#)
- Your browser is a gateway to information, both good and bad. [Filter out the bad stuff with this powerful, free filtering service.](#)
- Don't like Facebook's new layout? [Change the look and much more with this handy browser extension.](#)

http://www.komando.com/tips/index.aspx?id=13955&utm_medium=nl&utm_source=app&utm_content=2013-01-29-fifl-totd-cta&page=6

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