

## The Top 7 New Features in IE 9



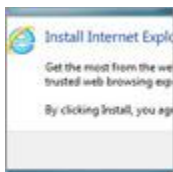
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<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2380153,00.asp>

As you've no doubt heard by now, [Microsoft's](#) next browser, Internet Explorer 9, has moved on from the beta stage to become a release candidate. This means it's pretty much in its final form, and that the next step is full release to the Web. If you want the full scoop, read PCMag.com's in-depth [review of Internet Explorer 9](#), but for a quick cheat sheet, we've compiled a list of some of the most appealing new features in the release candidate. Most of what's in the RC is identical to what you saw in the beta, but below are the standout additions to a browser that outstrips its predecessor, IE8, by a country mile in speed and compatibility.

**1. It's even faster.** On the often-cited SunSpider JavaScript benchmark, IE had been a sort of laughing-stock for years. No more. In my tests of the the IE9 Release Candidate, Microsoft's new browser outstripped all comers, and improved on its own beta by 36 percent. Google Chrome had long led the field on this test. In other examples of improved performance, Microsoft has posted quite a few [graphics hardware acceleration demos](#), which show IE's speed lead in delivering this emerging type of Web content.

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**2. Tracking Protection.** Another area where IE has taken the lead is in this privacy-related issue of Tracking Protection. Most sites request content from third parties, and often these are ad networks that track users' web surfing habits and build up profiles by combining data from many sites that use the same third party. A video explaining how it works can be viewed [here](#).

After the [FTC issued a call](#) for a system on the Web similar to the "Do Not Call" lists available as a deterrent to incessant telemarketer calls, Microsoft was the first to come up with a solution, and its solution is the most flexible and comprehensive. Google offers a "Keep My Opt-Outs" plug-in that opts you out of ad tracking from companies that adhere to industry self-regulation programs (without actually blocking the communication), and Firefox has proposed an HTTP header code that requests sites not to track the user.

Microsoft's solution is both more subtle and more powerful, even allowing users to subscribe to lists from organizations like TRUSTe that contain [domains](#) they recommend blocking. Users can adjust their block lists, or automatically build custom lists based on how many third-party calls are being made by sites they visit.

You have to turn on Tracking Protection from the Safety menu—it's not enabled by default. A new icon with the international "no" symbol shows up when the feature is working, and you can click this to see that some content was blocked. It also lets you turn off the protection if you choose.

**3. Pinned Site Control for Site Owners.** The beta already offered this innovative way to give sites equal billing with installed applications by placing an icon button in the [Windows 7](#) Task bar that directly launches the site in IE9. I should note that in Google Chrome, you can choose "Create applications shortcuts..." from the Tools menu to create a similar Task bar icon, but IE9's takes advantage of Windows 7's Jump lists, where Google's do not.

**4. HTML5 Location.** Google Chrome has supported HTML5 location capabilities since version 5 came out last spring, and Firefox and Opera also support this technology. This lets a Web site query the browser to find its whereabouts, and then present geographically relevant results—similar to how smart phone apps can, for example,

show you the nearest ATM machines or brunch spots. Microsoft's geo-location in IE9 uses the same services to determine where you are as it does for Windows Phone 7 smartphones, based on a database of access points. Though my favorite example of HTML5 location, Google Maps, isn't yet enabled for IE9, Microsoft has posted a [demo that locates you](#), as a proof of concept. It found my hotel precisely! For privacy, a warning notification lets you choose whether you want to share your location. Look for plenty more useful applications for this feature down the pike.

**5. Tabs on their own row.** The new design of IE9 is geared towards maximizing the space allotted to the Web page you're viewing, and minimizing user interface controls. This meant crowding the address box, control buttons, and tabs all on one row. Some testers told Microsoft that they needed more space for more tabs, so now the browser allows you to give all your tabs their own row, below the One Box. A bonus tab improvement is that you can close a background tab by hovering the mouse over it and clicking the X that appears—similar to most other browsers.

**6. Repeat One Box Searches.** As with Google Chrome, IE9 combines the address and search boxes into what Microsoft calls the "One Box." This gets a couple improvements in the Release Candidate. Now if you're not happy with the first set of search results, you can click the magnifying glass icon in the One Box to re-enter your search terms, add or edit them, or even choose a different search provider. Another tweak that I appreciate is that, unlike in the beta, you can now narrow your search results to a site [domain](#) in the One Box, using the form: "search terms site:*site.com*."

**7. Less-intrusive notifications.** As in the IE9 beta, notifications have moved to the bottom of the screen, where you're more likely to see them than IE8's bar at the top of the window. I had noticed an excess of these yellow warnings and advisories in the beta, but thankfully the IE9 has toned them down some. Now if a non-essential notification appears, it will discreetly withdraw after a brief period. Other notification improvements include more visibility for download notifications (they start to glow if you ignore them) and the ability to delete downloads of ill-repute right from the notification area.