

# Handy tips to secure your web browser

What is the most secure web browser? Google Chrome? Mozilla Firefox? Microsoft's Internet Explorer? It's a simple question-but the answer is a bit complicated.



Image: [www.freedigitalphotos.net](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net)

In an autumn 2013 poll, security-conscious browser users overwhelmingly voted Firefox as the most secure, but during the annual Pwn2own hacking contest in March 2014, Firefox was exploited four times with zero-day attacks, making it one of the least secure browsers. To complicate matters further, a 2013 comparative analysis of five popular web browsers by NSS Labs found that Internet Explorer outperformed its competitors. Even so, the NSS Labs research showed that no single browser uniformly protected users against the majority of security threats and privacy risks.

If no single browser is bulletproof, the next best thing is to make your favourite browser as secure as possible. Here are five ways you can enhance the security of your browser:

- 1. Configure your browser's security and privacy settings:** Review your browser's privacy and security settings to make sure you're comfortable with what's checked or unchecked.  
For example, look to see if your browser is blocking third-party cookies, which can enable advertisers to track your online activities. For specific browser security and privacy settings, read the recommendations and steps outlined in the US Department of Homeland Security's "Securing Your Web Browser". The guide also explains browser features and their associated risks, such as ActiveX, Java, certain plug-ins, cookies, and JavaScript
- 2. Keep your browser updated:** Frequently, browser updates are released to plug recently discovered security holes. So it's important always to keep any browsers you use updated.
- 3. Sign up for alerts:** Consider setting up Google alerts for your browser to stay current on any emerging security issues. If you use Internet Explorer, for example, create a Google Alert using the keywords Internet Explorer security, or something similar. You can opt to receive instant, daily or weekly alerts whenever news articles or other content

relevant to that topic hits the Web;

4. **Be cautious when installing plug-ins:** Plug-ins and extensions can sometimes put you at risk. For instance, earlier this year it was discovered that some Chrome extensions can change service or ownership without notification to users. As a result, Chrome's regulations for extensions is changing this June to keep extensions from becoming anything other than "simple and single-purpose in nature," according to Google; and
5. **Install security plug-ins:** The majority of plug-ins and extensions are safe and some can help bolster your browser's security. Here are three suggested-and free-browser extensions for added security:
  - **HTTPS Everywhere:** The Electronic Frontier Foundation and The Tor Project jointly developed this Firefox, Chrome, and Opera extension. HTTPS is a communications protocol for securing communications over a computer network, vs the standard HTTP protocol, which is more widely used but less secure. (The S in HTTPS stands for secure.) HTTPS Everywhere encrypts communication with many major websites to help secure your browsing experience.
  - **Web of Trust (also known as WOT):** This extension for Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Safari and Opera helps you determine if a website is safe to surf. The extension displays traffic signal icons next to URLs and links. Green means the site is reliable; yellow indicates you should proceed with caution; red translates to steer clear. The ratings are crowd sourced from WOT's global user base and are supported by trusted third-party sources, such as up-to-date directories of malware sites.
  - **LongURL.org:** If you're on Twitter or Facebook and you see a shortened link embedded in an interesting post, you might click it without a second thought. But shortened links have been known to mask malicious links. If you're unsure of a shortened link, copy and paste it into the search box at LongURL.org. You'll see where the link would take you, without having to actually click through to the site. LongURL.org is also available as a Firefox browser extension.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>