Browser Basics

In this lesson, we'll introduce the importance, function, and role of web browsers.
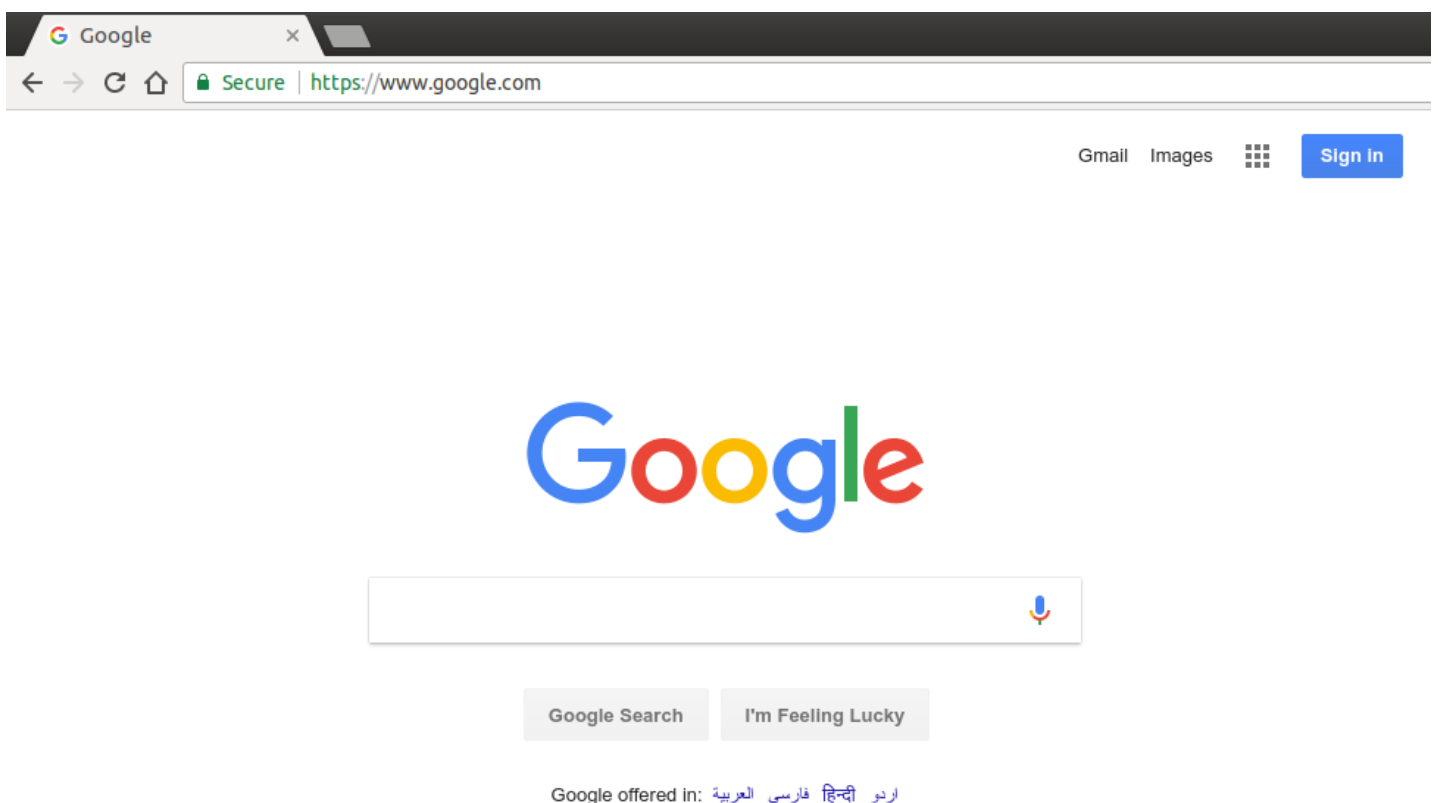
We'll cover the following ^
• Lynx • Try Lynx out!

I want to open this course with a chapter aimed at understanding what browsers do and a brief explanation on how they work. Since most of your customers will interact with your web application through a browser, it's imperative to understand the basics of these wonderful programs.

The browser is a rendering engine. Its job is to download a web page and render it in a way that's understandable to a human being.

Although this is an oversimplification, it's all we need to know for now: the user enters an address in the browser bar and the browser downloads the "document" at that URL and renders it.

Lynx

You might be used to working with some of the most popular browsers such as Chrome, Firefox, Edge or Safari, but that doesn't mean that there aren't other browsers out there. Lynx, for example, is a lightweight, text-based browser that works from your command line.

At the heart of lynx lies the same principles that you would find in any other mainstream browser. A user enters a web address (URL), the browser fetches the document and renders it; the only difference is that lynx does not use a visual rendering engine but rather a text-based interface.

Try Lynx out!

Try it out in the interactive terminal below! We've already run the command `lynx google.com`.

● Terminal

We broadly understand what a browser does, but let's take a closer look at the steps these ingenious applications do for us in the next lesson.