

Explainer: Browsers

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Why we should spend time on browsers

- Everyone uses a browser at some point.
- A browser is a **general purpose** app for accessing sites on the internet. I.e., if you can do something on/with the Internet, you can do it with a browser.
- There are many browsers available. E.g., Safari, Chrome, Edge, Firefox, etc. While they all perform the same primary role and have similar features...
 - How you use similar features tends to vary between browsers; i.e., their UIs differ
 - Their strengths and weaknesses vary; e.g., some browsers have stronger security & privacy capabilities than others
- Some sites host web apps (e.g., mail.google.com). When you visit such sites with your browser, the web app is running “inside” your browser app. Being able to recognize when your browser is running a web app and being able to differentiate between a browser feature and a web app feature can be key to “getting things done” and solving problems you encounter.

Common Browser UI elements

- Windows
- Tabs
- Panes
 - View / main
 - Sidebars
- Toolbar
- Address bar

Features

- Bookmarks
- History
 - browsing
 - search
- Cache
 - Cookies
 - History: browsing & search
 - Files: images, etc
- Download
- Autofill
 - Including built-in password managers
- Private browsing (aka, incognito mode)
- “Distraction free” mode
- Tab groups
- Profiles
- Blockers: advertising, third party, tracker, fingerprint, pop-up, re-direct, scripting/cross-site scripting, ...
- Extensions
- Default system browser — hmmm...default and how to change the browser the os launches when you click on a link
- Default search engine — hmmm....default; how to change the search engine used by a browser
- What you see when you start your browser: i.e., pages that automatically load

Key Terms

browser	
site	
service	
server	
page	
home page	
link	
URL	
host	
HTTP/HTTPS	
HTML	