

Browsing the Internet

This is one of a series of articles provided by the Oakmont Technology Learning Center on the use of technology by seniors.

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A web browser is an app that allows one to access web sites and services on the Internet. For PC/Windows users, Internet Explorer was the dominant browser for 25+ years, but was officially retired in June this year. Per oberlo.com, the most popular browsers in 2022, are: Google Chrome (64.91%), Safari (19.03%), Edge (3.99%), Firefox (3.26%), Samsung Internet (2.86%), and Opera (2.12%). These percentages vary some on different sites that were researched, but all show that Chrome dominates (for now).

A common question asked in OTLC computer classes is “so what’s the best browser to use?” The answer is “it depends.” Some of us use multiple browsers on our computers, each for different purposes. With a number of choices, the questions to ask yourself are: what hardware/OS you use (Mac, PC, Chromebook, Android, iPhone/iPad), how well-configured your computer is (CPU and memory/RAM), whether you use multiple platforms (e.g. PC and iPhone/iPad), how much privacy you want, what apps you use the most, whether you are a “power user” needing speed, what extensions you need, and more. Note that there are little-known browsers out there too: Brave and Vivaldi are two examples you may never have heard of.

If you’re using Google apps, they will run best on Chrome. If you’re a PC/Windows user, Edge might be the best. Mac users often use Safari. Chromebook users use Chrome. A Google search on “best browser” turns up good information and browser pros/cons on lifewire.com, pcmag.com, techradar.com, zdnet.com, highspeedinternet.com, digitaltrends.com.

According to PCmag.com, “Chrome may be leading in usage (except, of course, on Apple devices), but it’s not ahead by every measure or by number of capabilities. Firefox, Edge, Safari, and Opera all have features not found in Google’s browser. That’s not to say that Chrome isn’t an excellent piece of software, but you should know that there are worthy alternatives.” Note that Edge is based on Chromium, Google’s open source browser.

If privacy is high on your list, then zdnet.com recommends Firefox or Brave. According to cloudwards.net, when it comes to privacy, “Safari and Chrome are both secure, and Safari actually uses Google’s Safe Browsing database. They are pretty much neck and neck when it comes to privacy and security, but if you’re concerned about your online privacy, we’d advise using a Virtual Private Network (VPN).”

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