Choosing the Right Browser

The once humble browser has fast become the most important icon on any PC or laptop screen. With so much of our digital lives now being lived online, accessing the internet in the fastest and most convenient way possible is essential. Modern browsers are far more than just portals to the web though, instead they have advanced security features, plug-in tools to make life easier, and even complete ecosystems built around them so you never need open another app to get things done.

This guide will compare the features of various popular web browsers to help pick the right one for your work.
Browser Statistics

Internet Explorer has the largest market share of any single web browser. However, this does not necessarily mean that it is the best browser out there.
In fact, Internet Explorer's popularity has been dwindling rapidly.
Mozilla Firefox

Firefox is an open source browser that has garnered a massive following since its release a decade ago. However, it never managed to attract more users than Internet Explorer. It was later also adapted to a mobile operating system, Firefox OS.
Pros:

- Firefox is more openly developed than others, and it is used as the default browser for most of the major Linux distributions.
- Firefox is the most extensible of all the browsers and it can be customized in ways other browsers can’t, with personas and add-ons.
- Firefox is also available for Android devices. Users can make use of Firefox Sync to replicate tabs, bookmarks, history, add-ons, etc. across multiple computers and mobile devices, making it a good option to use on mobile device as well.

Cons:

- Firefox is a rather heavy browser. Sometimes the increased file size and memory requirements result in a sluggish, and perhaps less stable, experience on older systems.

**Who it’s For:** Open Source advocates, people who love extensions
Internet Explorer

Internet Explorer is a series of graphical web browsers developed by Microsoft and included as a part of the Microsoft Windows since 1995. Internet Explorer ships as the default browser for Windows PC's, tablets, and phones.

Internet Explorer was one of the most widely used web browsers, attaining a peak of about 95% usage share during 2002 and 2003.

The older versions of Internet Explorer (IE 6, 7 and 8) are disastrous and their refusals to die have caused many problems for the Web developers and users. IE 9 and 10 have improved greatly though.
Pros:

• The browser is integrated nicely with Windows 7, 8, and 10. It is the only browser that is fully integrated with the Windows new tiled interface.

• The recent version is running faster and is more compatible with open web standards, making it much easier to use.

Cons:

• The available add-ons pale in comparison to those offered by other web browsers such as Chrome and Firefox.

• Many bug issues, lack of features to synchronize bookmarks,

• Large security holes that are targets for hackers.

Who it’s For: Windows users, corporate employees (where the system administrators require the use of IE).
Google Chrome

Google Chrome is an open source web browser made by Google. It builds on parts from other open source software, such as WebKit and Mozilla. The name comes from the graphical user interface frame, or "chrome", of web browsers. The open source project behind Google Chrome is known as Chromium.

As of December 2015, StatCounter estimates that Google Chrome has a 58% worldwide usage share of web browsers as a desktop browser. It is also the most popular browser for smartphones, and combined across all platforms at about 45%. Its success has led to Google expanding the 'Chrome' brand name on various other products such as the Chromecast.
Pros:

• Fast and Stable
• Large number of extensions in the Chrome store
• Users can also install themes, altering much of Chrome’s appearance.
• Chrome is available for all of the major desktop operating systems as well as Android and iOS.
• Users who sign into their Google accounts can sync their tabs, bookmarks, browsing history, and passwords across all of their devices running Chrome
• It offers the best compatibility with Google’s range of products and services

Cons:

• Chrome ships with proprietary bits. This will not bother most people, but open source advocates may wish to install Chromium, the open source version of Chrome
• The browser has become relatively bloated since its initial release

Who it’s For: Googlers, People who love extensions and a fast browser.
Safari

Safari is a web browser developed by Apple based on the ‘WebKit’ engine. First released in 2003 with Mac OS X Panther, a mobile version has been included in Apple devices since the introduction of the iPhone in 2007. It is the default browser on all Apple devices. A Windows version, now discontinued, was available from 2007 to 2012.

Safari has been designed based on the premise that the most useful browser is one that "gets out of your way and lets you simply enjoy the Web."
Pros:

- It is a speedy browser.
- There is support for syncing using iCloud.
- In Mac OS X, Safari will give you the most integrated experience.

Cons:

- While Safari used to be available for Windows, it is now only available on Apple platforms.
- While syncing is supported, you’re out of luck if you want to move to a Windows computer or grow tired of using the iPhone/iPod.

Who it’s For: Mac/iOS users and fans
Unlike the previously mentioned browsers, Opera largely walks to the beat of its own drum. It’s an adventurous browser, though some of its pros could also be considered cons.
Pros:

• The browser is known for innovation, such as debuting the speed dial feature that most browsers have since adopted.

• It comes bundled with more functionality than other browsers, such as built-in email and IRC clients

• It also has options for reducing bandwidth on slower connections

• Its mobile version is speedy and is great for mobile surfing

• You can sync your data across all Opera browsers with Opera Link

Cons:

• Opera is not open source. While Internet Explorer and Safari aren't either, they ship as the default browsers for their respective operating systems. In Opera's case, not being open source has probably hindered its adoption somewhat

• That built-in email and IRC client that comes with the desktop version might also be considered unnecessary bloat.

• Its extension library is not as extensive as Firefox or Chrome

Who it's For: Tinkerers, People with low bandwidth.
Conclusion

It’s not that easy anymore to say that one browser is better than the other. Google Chrome has recently grown in popularity and is known as one of the faster and more compatible browsers, but it’s not hard to find those who swear by any of the other major browsers.

Which one you use for your business really depends on your purposes, the websites you visit frequently, and your organization’s specific requirements.

It may be best to try a couple of browsers at a time to see what fits you and your work best. Once you have a browser you (or your workplace) are comfortable with, the most important takeaway is that you keep your browser as updated as possible.