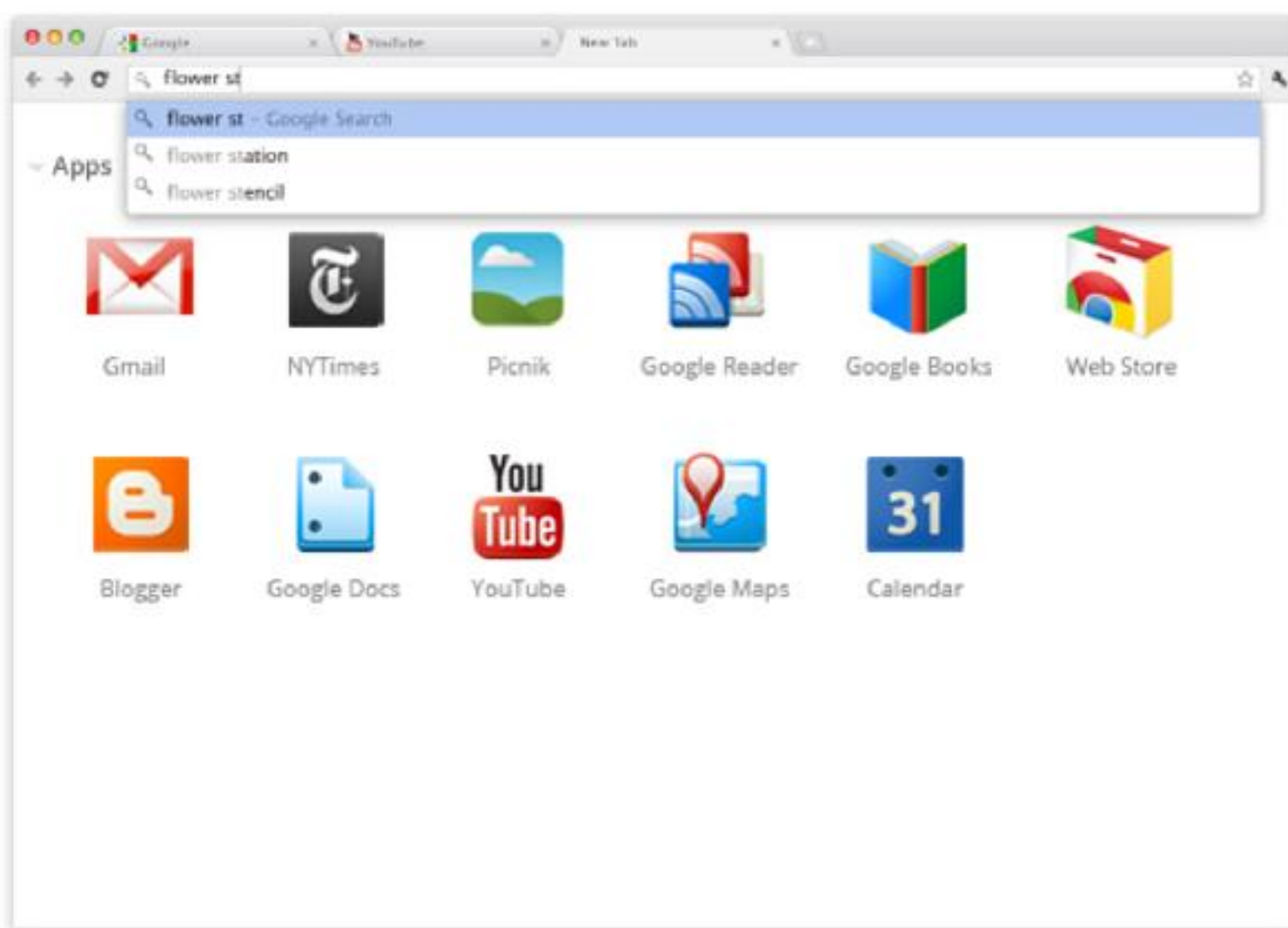


# How to Choose the Best Web Browser

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29 June 2011 12:03 PM ET



Nearly everyone with a computer uses a Web browser to access the Internet, but few give consideration to the browser they use. Most browsers have the same core features, but each adds a few of its own and puts emphasis on different parts of the browsing experience.

So should you stick with the browser that came with your computer, or would you be better served by another?

## Considerations

Here are a few things to consider when choosing a Web browser:

### Speed

Two common ways of affecting the speed of your browser are through Javascript and caching. Javascript, a type of programming language, powers many websites. Switching to a browser with better Javascript performance can be like switching to a faster computer. Also, browsers take some parts of the websites you visit and store them on your computer's hard drive, so they don't have to download those pieces again when you return. This "caching" makes webpages load faster. Some browsers will even download pieces of webpages before you decide to visit them (based on your Web-browsing patterns), so they will load faster when you do.

### Security

Security is critical when completing important tasks on the Internet. Browsers use methods not only to protect your information as you access websites, but also to protect your computer from malicious websites. Encryption, phishing filters and download warnings are common in most browsers. Some also use a "sandbox," a memory space that cannot talk to the rest of your computer, as a way of protecting you from malicious websites.

### Capabilities

Browsers have different built-in capabilities, and most have the ability to expand on those capabilities through add-ons, extensions, or plug-ins. Some will allow you to change their look through different color "themes." Customizing your toolbars by adding, removing or moving buttons and bars is another way browsers can be personalized.

### Options

The four most popular web browsers, [based on percentage](#) of use in May 2011, are:

#### [Microsoft Internet Explorer](#) (43 percent)

- Most popular for over 10 years, though declining due to strong competition
- Included with all Windows-format computers
- Not many add-on options
- Not very customizable

#### [Mozilla Firefox](#) (28 percent)

- Best known for large catalog of add-ons
- Large number of themes available
- Very customizable
- Frequent new features and speed improvements

#### [Google Chrome](#) (17 percent)

- Relatively new, gaining share quickly
- Emphasis on speed and security to encourage people to use Google's Web-based services
- Large catalog of available extensions
- Frequent new features and speed improvements
- Early access to new features in Google's Web-based services

#### [Apple Safari](#) (7 percent)

- Default browser on Macintosh computers
- Also available for PC and Apple's mobile devices.
- Not many add-on options
- Not very customizable

## Decisions

So which is right for you? Any of these four, and many less-popular browsers, will do most of what you need. Updates for each are coming out at a quick pace, so knowing which is best at any given time can be a challenge. If you want lots of specifics, check out [Wikipedia's Comparison of Web Browsers](#) page.

In general, if you don't care much about customizing your browser, it probably makes sense to stick with the latest versions of the default Internet Explorer on Windows, or Safari on Macintosh. If you like to personalize your computer, then Firefox or Chrome is a better choice.

All browsers are free to download, so try a few and see which you prefer — you can switch at any time. No matter which you choose, though, keep it up-to-date so it has the latest fixes and security options.