

Browser Extensions

Learn how to ensure that the browser extensions you are using are safe and secure.

1. What Are Browser Extensions?

Browser extensions are a little like apps. You can install them for a variety of different browsers, including Chrome or Firefox. And similar to apps, you can find browsers via a browser extension store for different web browsers.

Browser extensions can perform a wide variety of tasks. Here are just a few things a browser extension can do:

- Play a game
- Integrate a service, such as note-taking
- Get notifications
- Check your writing
- Change the way your user experience works, such as altering the way your tabs work or changing colors or fonts

2. Challenges With Browser Extensions

Browser extensions can do many things and can often help you conduct work or different online activities more efficiently. However, they can pose security concerns. Here are a few reasons why:

- Browser extensions often require permissions in order to work properly, which means they can have access to your accounts and personal information
- Browser extensions are often created by third-parties, who may or may not be legitimate. A browser extension from a nefarious source could steal your password, sell your data to advertisers, or redirect you to sites that contain malware
- Browser extensions can update automatically, which means they could be hijacked and start collecting your data without you realizing anything is wrong

3. Ensure Your Browser Extensions Are Secure

First, make a list of the browser extensions you use currently:

Next, look up the extensions on the browser extension store for your web browser and search for the extension by name online.

- Are there reviews that are concerning?
- Are the creators of this extension familiar? Do they have a good reputation?
- How does this extension actually work? What permissions does it require?

Write down your observations about your browser extensions here, based on your research and what you have learned:

If anything seems concerning, delete the browser extension!

4. Be Cautious When Installing New Browser Extensions

Use the following best practices to ensure that you are installing safe and secure browser extensions in the future.

- Do not install too many extensions! Think about whether or not you really need this extension in the first place. What value is this extension adding?
- Read reviews of the extension
- Look for information on who created the browser extension. Do they have a good reputation as a legitimate web developer?
- Make sure you understand how the extension works and what permissions it needs. Are you comfortable with the permissions it will require?