Browser Extensions

In This Module

- What are browser extensions?

- How might we manage privacy and security while using browser extensions?

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

What Can Browser Extensions Do?

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
- Get notifications
- Check your writing
- Change the way your user experience works

What would you add to this list?

What to Watch For

Browser extensions often require permissions in order to work properly, which means they can have access to your accounts and personal information.

Browser extensions can update automatically, which means they could be hijacked and start collecting your data without you realizing anything is wrong.

What To Watch For

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.

Activity

Use the handout provided to review the browser extensions you currently use

Search each one to see if they pose any security risks

Best Practices for Browser Extensions

- Do not install too many extensions!
  - Think about whether you really need the extension in the first place
- Read reviews of the browser extension in question
- Look for information on who created the browser extension
- Make sure you understand how the extension works
- Make sure you understand what permissions it needs

Takeaways

- Browser extensions can perform a variety of different tasks and can be incredibly useful, or even fun

- However, browser extensions carry some risks. They are often created by third-party developers. Sketchy browser extensions can gain access to your personal information, deliver malware to your device, or otherwise compromise your security

- Be sure to carefully check before installing any browser extension and make sure you know who created it, what it is doing, and what it requires to perform its tasks

Resources

Privacy Badger (link)

"How to Make Sure Your Browser Extensions Are Safe" from *Wired* (link)

"Tips for assessing the safety of an extension" from Mozilla (link)

Questions?