

The Best Firefox Web Browser Extensions

“Add new functionality to your browser.”

by Pete Choppin

You might have noticed if you have visited [Mozilla's Firefox extension site](#) that looking for the best Firefox extensions is like searching for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

Firefox extensions are small add-on programs that add a new piece of functionality to the browser. These extensions can range from adding a new toolbar button to adding a completely new feature. The great thing about these extensions is that you can choose which extensions you want to add. This allows Firefox to stay small in size and run efficiently. One of the advantages of using the Firefox browser is that there is a whole community of developers designing add-ons to suit your every need. Faster browsing, more security features, sleek visual enhancements. You name it, and it's probably been done.

The following is my list of 15 of the best extensions for Firefox. They have been classified into three categories: those that add additional enhancements to the browser and improve a user's experience, those that add additional enhancements to certain Web sites, and those that are quite useful but only for certain segments of the population.

Browser Enhancement Extensions

[Adblock Plus](#) *(Must have)*

This is the first extension I always add to Firefox whenever I install it. Adblock Plus removes unwanted content, such as ads or flash, from a Web page based on a set of user-defined filters. A companion to Adblock Plus, [Adblock Filterset.G Updater](#), automatically downloads the latest version of a set of filters that will block most ads on the Web.

[Greasemonkey](#)

Greasemonkey is a Firefox extension that allows you to modify Web sites to improve functionality or appearance. This extension associates a bit of code with specific Web pages. This code runs every time you visit the page, dynamically changing the appearance and functionality of a page. In many ways, these scripts are just Firefox extensions in a different format.

[All-in-One Sidebar](#)

The All-in-One Sidebar extension adds a sidebar panel to the browser, allowing you to quickly switch between windows, such as the downloads, extensions, or theme windows. Inspired by the Opera sidebar, this extension includes a toolbar that can be customized.

Download Statusbar

You're probably familiar with that sometimes-pesky "Downloads" window that pops up whenever you download a file in Firefox. Download Statusbar prevents that window from popping up and instead provides you the same information in the status bar at the bottom of the browser window. (You can still manually open the "Downloads" window if you find you

need it.)

[SpellBound](#)

SpellBound provides a spell checker similar to the type used in a word processor. As a word is entered in any text box on the page, Spellbound highlights the misspelled words with a red dotted underline. The spelling can then be easily corrected by clicking on the red underlined word, and Spellbound will pop up a menu with potential corrections, providing a choice of which word to replace.

[PDF Download](#)

The PDF Download extension allows you to choose how to handle PDF (Adobe Acrobat) files. Every time a PDF link is clicked, this extension offers the choice of whether to open the PDF file inside a new tab, download it to the computer, or view it as HTML.

[FoxyTunes](#)

Foxy Tunes places controls for the media player of your choice within the Firefox toolbar. You can pause, forward/reverse, play, adjust the volume, and view what is playing. Almost all major media players are supported. You can find a number of [FoxyTunes skins here](#).

[Download Them All](#)

Download Them All will download, in just one click, all the links or images contained in a Web page through a set of customizable filters.

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Firefox Tip 1: Problematic Firefox Extensions

Some of the most popular Firefox extensions have memory leaks. This will slow your browser down and/or create conflicts with other programs. Some of these extensions include FasterFox, IE Tab, Session Saver and Tabbrowser Extensions.

An article, "[Problematic Extensions](#)," at MozillaZine lists known extensions that will cause side effects in Firefox along with recommended workarounds. It is up to you to decide if the extra feature an extension provides is worth the issues caused by a particular extension.

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Site Integration Extensions

[Optimize Google](#)

Optimize Google enhances the main Google search page results by adding extra information on the page, such as quick links to Yahoo, MSN, etc., and removing unwanted information such as ads.

[Gmail Manager](#)

Gmail Manager allows for the management of multiple Gmail accounts and receiving new mail notifications from the Firefox status bar. It displays account details including unread messages, saved drafts and space used.

[Stumble Upon](#) (Must have)

The StumbleUpon Firefox extension is an interface to the [StumbleUpon](#) site, a large community of users who make reviews and recommendations of Web sites to other users. The extension allows you to rate sites as you browse them, add reviews, and view reviews submitted by other users.

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Firefox Tip 2: Manage Your Firefox Extensions

Several Firefox extensions are designed to help manage rest of the Firefox extensions on your computer.

Update Notifier

The [Update Notifier](#) Firefox extension notifies you when updates are available for your extensions and themes by displaying several update icons in the browser. This extension makes it easy to check for any available updates and then apply those updates.

Firefox Extension Backup

The [Firefox Extension Backup Extension](#) (FEBE) backs up all extensions, themes, bookmarks and preferences.

A companion extension, [Compact Library Extension Organizer](#) (CLEO) bundles everything into a single .xpi file that you can easily install into any installation of Firefox. Thus you can package up all of your extensions and easily install the .xpi into a profile or installation of Firefox, just like installing any other Firefox extension. Currently these extensions are for Windows only.

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Specialty Extensions

[Web Developer](#)

The Web Developer Extension adds a toolbar to the browser containing various Web developer tools. It outlines page elements, displays the size of images, gives CSS and form information, disables certain elements on a page, and much more. Also check out [Firebug](#), an extension for Firefox to help with debugging AJAX, DHTML and JavaScript Web applications.

ScribeFire

ScribeFire is a full-featured blog-editing extension for blogs such as Blogger, Movable Type and WordPress. It includes draft support, del.icio.us integration, ping support and Technorati support.

MeasureIt (Must have)

After installing this extension, you'll have a small ruler icon in your status bar. When you click on this icon, the client area of your browser window will fade out a little, and you'll have a crosshair cursor. This will allow you to measure pixel width and height of any elements on a Web page. This is a must have for anyone trying to format a Web page.

Scrapbook

Scrapbook allows you to save Web pages to the computer, highlighting text and creating sticky notes on these pages at the same time. In addition, Scrapbook includes the ability to perform full text searches and filtering of the saved pages.

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Firefox Tip 3: Easily Install Firefox Extensions or Themes

Because of security concerns, Firefox forces every extension installed to be in a list of acceptable domains. Consequently, there are two different ways you can install Firefox extensions. One is the "official" way and one involves dragging and dropping.

The "Official" Way

1. Click the link to install the extension.
2. Click on the Edit Options button in the yellow bar at the top of the screen that says the extension was blocked.
3. Click on the Allow button to allow that domain to install the extension and then click on the Close button to exit the window.
4. Click the install link again and a software installation window will appear. Then, click on the Install Now button to install the extension.

Drag and Drop Way

1. Find the link to install the extension.
2. Drag the install link into the address field of the browser.
3. A software installation window will appear. Click on the Install Now button to install the extension.

Note: You will need to shut down and restart Firefox for a newly installed extension to work.

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There are many more extensions available to choose from on [Mozilla's Firefox extension site](#). Hopefully this list gives you a good start on some very useful extensions.

Resources and Guides

[Introduction to Mozilla Firefox](#)—An overview of the features in Firefox and how to install and run Firefox for the first time.

[Firefox Tutor](#)—Articles and tutorials on Firefox features.

[Firefox Tweak Guide](#)—An in-depth guide on how to customize Firefox.