

LIVING WITHOUT ADOBE FLASH, ADOBE READER, OR ORACLE'S JAVA ON YOUR COMPUTER

Adobe Flash, Adobe Reader, and Oracle's Java. All three are virtually ubiquitous on modern-day PCs, and all three provide handy functionality—functionality that, in the case of Flash and Java, can't be directly reproduced by a third-party solution.

Widespread adoption of the software makes all three irresistible targets for hackers and malware peddlers. The attacks reached a fever pitch a couple years ago, with a flood of reports about Flash, Reader, and Java exploits.

The good news is that you don't have to use Java, Flash, and Reader just because everyone else does. You can spend many hours on your computer without Reader, Java, Flash, and their respective browser plug-ins without suffering massive irritations.

LIVING WITHOUT ADOBE READER

It's incredibly easy to remove this icon from your computer. Ditching Adobe Reader is almost shockingly easy. While the software may be synonymous with PDFs, it's far from being the only PDF reader on the block.

Sumatra PDF ([link](#)) and **Foxit Reader** ([link](#)), not only receive much less malicious attention than Adobe's program, they also perform like greased lightning in comparison.

Sumatra PDF may not have many bells or whistles, but it's fast, and most of us have PDF reading needs (opening and reading BKK documents, for example) that are fairly simple. Foxit Reader has a few more extras and may be a little faster. Bottom line? Both work like a charm.

Microsoft's Edge browser has its own PDF reader and since it is the default reader any PDF file that you open in Windows 10 will use the Microsoft product.

LIVING WITHOUT JAVA

Java's a bit trickier to abandon, however very few websites use Oracle's software platform on the client side—just 0.2 percent of all sites online. Windows applications that require Java are similarly scarce. As a result, there's a strong

chance you don't even need Java on your computer. In fact, it may not even be installed on your machine.

Here's the rub, though: The websites and programs that *do* use Java tend to be very high-profile ones, and they're often mission-critical.

As it turns out, many banking websites rely on Java. If a website you frequent needs Java, then you have to have Java on your PC—it's as simple as that. Likewise, some pretty popular desktop applications are built atop Java, including the OpenOffice productivity suite.

So most people don't need Java. But if you do, then you *really* need it. What to do? Uninstall it from your computer. If you need Java for a particular website or program, that application will bark at you next time you try to use it—at which point you can quickly reinstall Java. (at Java.com)

For many people, that bark will never come. And if it comes months down the line when you're visiting a rarely used site, you'll know you can uninstall Java once again when you're done with that particular task. The headache of reinstalling and uninstalling Java once per year is nothing compared to the headache of installing those constant critical patches—or, worse, leaving your computer vulnerable to attack.

Alternatively, if a site you visit on a regular basis requires Java, consider downloading another Web browser, installing the Java plugin for that browser, and then using it only when visiting your site that requires Java. That way your primary browser will be Java-free, eliminating the possibility of stumbling across a malicious Java exploit during your day-to-day browsing.

LIVING WITHOUT FLASH

Even if you can live without Java, trying to banish Flash from your PC may be next to impossible. The headaches begin when you realize that both Google Chrome and Microsoft's Internet Explorer ship with Flash woven into their very fabric. You simply can't excise Adobe's multimedia Flash player from either of those browsers. However, if you use Windows Edge browser, you can turn Flash on or off via the Advanced Settings.

A ton of websites break without Flash. Hulu won't work without Flash. Neither will Amazon Instant Video. (Netflix runs on Microsoft's Silverlight, so it will work.)

You might be able to work without Flash if you are not heavily invested in online media. Just be prepared for some websites to look wonky or break entirely.

So what's the best option for the security conscious individual who just can't bear to cut Flash out completely? You'll want to stick to a browser other than Chrome or IE as your primary Flash-less surfing tool, and then use Chrome, IE, or another browser with the Flash plug-in installed when you stumble across a Flash-centric website

The prospect of abandoning Flash is becoming more viable by the day, though. And as mobile technology consumes the world, websites are turning away from Flash to embrace HTML5 in droves. The number of Flash-bearing sites has plunged recently, from just over 25 percent to 20.2 percent in a brief period of time.

YouTube, for example, has dumped Flash for HTML5 entirely over the past couple of years. With any luck, Flash's final days are just over the horizon.