

WHEN YOUR BROWSER MISBEHAVES

Google Chrome... Microsoft Edge... Mozilla Firefox... Apple Safari... all web browsers misbehave in mysterious and frustrating ways occasionally. You could spend hours trying to troubleshoot the problem, but sometimes the Reset Button is the answer. Here are some tips on when (and when NOT) to reset your browser

When and How to Reset Your Browser

When struggling with a web browser that's not doing what it should, sometimes it's better to just reset it to the "factory defaults" that are known to work. However, that may come at a price. But let's talk about the problem first, and then move on to solutions.

Symptoms of a borked browser may include browser lock-ups, Web pages that do not display properly (or flash on screen and then disappear), very slow rendering of Web pages, and add-ons that do not function as expected. You may also have unwanted toolbars or notice that your search engine has been hijacked. If you are being redirected to a page that you didn't request, that's almost certainly a sign of a malware issue affecting your browser. Generally, problems start shortly after a new add-on or software package is installed.

When do you need to reset your browser? Most often, a reset is needed because add-on software is causing a problem. Sometimes add-ons don't play well together, and finding the subtle conflicts between add-ons is a detective job for professionals. Some add-ons are Trojans concealing malware, and it's not always obvious how they got there.

If you like to tinker with browser settings you may have caused the problem yourself. For example, the wrong font size combined with a text-magnification factor of 150% can produce very weird results. It can be very time-consuming to review and adjust a lot of settings; a reset may be easiest way out.

If you've recently installed or uninstalled software, the Windows registry could have been damaged, causing browser oddities or malfunctions. Viruses and other types of malware can also do this sort of damage.

Dangerous Curves Ahead

When you reset a browser, you may lose some data stored in it that's important to you, or be forced to restore it from backup files. Most people have customized their browsers with extensions, add-ons, themes, font changes, and other setting tweaks. Many people have stored usernames and passwords in their browser's vaults. Most folks don't realize how convenient cached images, files, and browsing history are until these things vanish. Depending on which browser you use, some of this data will not survive a reset.

You might try searching online for a solution to a browser problem before you reset everything. Look for an authoritative source; ideally, the browser's developer. That would be the official user or support forum provided by Microsoft (Edge), Google (Chrome), Mozilla (Firefox) or Apple (Safari).

If your problem is an unwanted toolbar, or you suspect the problem is related to recently installed software, first try removing the offending item(s) via the Control Panel or delete the program from the Applications folder. It's also a good idea to run a scan with to check for and remove malware. **See a list of [Free Anti-Virus Programs](#) you can use for that task.**

If you don't find a credible solution, the next step will be to reset your browser.

Hitting the “RESET” Button

Here are brief instructions for resetting Edge, Chrome, and Firefox. Included are lists of what each browser keeps and deletes during a reset,

and provided a link to the official low-down on resetting for further details.

Google Chrome claims it “gives you the option to reset your browser settings in one easy click.” But it takes several clicks and some scrolling to get to the Reset button:

- Click the Settings menu (three dots) in the upper-right corner of Chrome
- Click on Settings
- Click “Advanced” in the left sidebar
- Click “Reset and clean up”
- Click “Restore settings to their original defaults”
- Click the blue “Reset settings” button

Here is what happens when you reset Chrome, quoted from the Google [Chrome Reset support page](#):

- Default search engine and saved search engines will be reset and to their original defaults.
- Homepage button will be hidden and the URL that you previously set will be removed.
- Default startup tabs will be cleared. The browser will show a new tab when you startup or continue where you left off if you're on a Chromebook.
- New Tab page will be empty unless you have a version of Chrome with an extension that controls it. In that case your page may be preserved.
- Pinned tabs will be unpinned.
- Content settings will be cleared and reset to their installation defaults.
- Cookies and site data will be cleared.
- Extensions and themes will be disabled.

Saved bookmarks and passwords will not be affected by a reset. Extensions and themes can be re-enabled, you don't have to install them again.

Microsoft Edge: Since Edge is now using the same code base as Chrome, the process is almost the same. Here are the steps to reset your Edge browser settings:

- Click the Settings menu (three dots) in the upper-right corner
- Click on Settings
- Click “Reset settings”
- Click “Restore settings to their original defaults”
- Click the blue “Reset settings” button

The same cleanup as described above for Chrome will take place. Saved bookmarks and passwords will not be affected by a reset. Likewise, extensions and themes can be re-enabled, you don't have to install them again.

Mozilla Firefox's Reset button is just a few clicks away. Click on the three-bar menu icon, then Help, then “Troubleshooting Information” and there's the "Refresh Firefox" button in the upper-right corner. Alternatively, type “about:support” in the address bar to go straight to the Troubleshooting Information page.

A Firefox reset saves backup copies of your bookmarks, browsing history, passwords, open windows, tabs, and tab groups, cookies, Web form auto-fill information, and personal dictionary. These data are stored in a folder on your desktop labeled, “Old Firefox data.” They can be restored if desired by simply copying files from the “old” folder to the new user profile folder, overwriting the default files.

Unlike all the other browsers, Firefox deletes all extensions and themes during a reset; you'll have to re-install those you want. Also purged are website-specific preferences, search engine preferences, download

history, security settings, download actions, plugin settings, toolbar customizations, user styles and social features, according to the [Firefox Reset support page](#).

To summarize: If your web browser is not behaving, a browser reset can often cure your ills. But first, try removing any recently installed software. Next, run a malware scan. If that doesn't fix things, check online support forums for possible fixes. As a last resort, hit the Reset button.