

EBOOK EXTRAS: v1.0
Downloads, Updates, Feedback



TAKE CONTROL OF

YOUR BROWSER

COVERS WEB BROWSERS ON
macOS • Windows
Mobile Devices

by **ROBYN WEISMAN**

\$14.99

easy ●●●
computing

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Read Me First	4
Updates and More	4
Basics	5
Introduction	6
Browser Quick Start	8
Learn the Differences Among Web Browsers	9
Anatomy of Your Browser Window	9
The Big Three Browsers	11
Wait! What About Microsoft?	16
The Next Tier of Browsers	18
The “Optimized for Chrome” Problem	20
Choose the Best Browser(s) for You	22
Manage Your Tabs and Windows	24
Open (and Reopen) Tabs and Windows	24
Manage Your Tabs.....	29
Tame Your Tabs	32
Bookmark Frequently Visited Places	35
Search the Web	42
Google and Other Search Engines	42
Improve Your Web Searches	48
Create Tabs for Items to Check Later	59
Safeguard Your Browsing	61
Basic Privacy and Security Precautions	62
Get a Dedicated Password Manager.....	74
Conduct Safe Online Transactions	79
Solve Browser Annoyance	83
Website Autoplay on Android.....	83
Font Is Too Small (or Big)	87

Ads Mar Your Browsing Experience	88
Kill Website Notifications	90
Page Won't Load Properly	93
Autocomplete Goes to the Wrong Site	95
When Nothing Seems to Work	96
Where to Find Help	97
Browse More Efficiently	98
Change Your Browser Preferences	99
Use Keyboard Shortcuts	104
Extend Your Browser	109
Install Extensions	111
Some of My Favorite Extensions.....	114
Check Out These Extensions	118
Companion App Extensions	122
Security and Privacy Extensions.....	123
Choose Your Extensions Wisely	127
Work with Your Desktop and Mobile Browsers	129
Differences Between Desktop and Mobile Browsers.....	130
Specific Differences Among Browsers	133
Sync Browser Data Across Devices	136
Use Browsers with Mobile Apps	139
About This Book.....	141
Ebook Extras.....	141
About the Author	142
About the Publisher.....	143
Copyright and Fine Print	144

Read Me First

Welcome to *Take Control of Your Browser*, version 1.0.1, published in April 2019 by alt concepts inc. This book was written by Robyn Weisman and edited by Joe Kissell.

This book helps you improve your web browsing experience by showing you how to choose the best browser (or more than one); configure it for maximum speed, privacy, and ease of use; search the web more effectively; and solve many common problems and annoyances.

If you want to share this ebook with a friend, we ask that you do so as you would with a physical book: “lend” it for a quick look, but ask your friend to buy a copy for careful reading or reference. Discounted [classroom and Mac user group copies](#) are available.

Copyright © 2019, Robyn Weisman. All rights reserved.

Updates and More

You can access extras related to this ebook on the web (use the link in [Ebook Extras](#), near the end; it’s available only to purchasers). On the ebook’s Take Control Extras page, you can:

- Download any available new version of the ebook for free, or buy any subsequent edition at a discount.
- Download various formats, including PDF, EPUB, and Mobipocket. (Learn about reading on mobile devices on our [Device Advice](#) page.)
- Read the ebook’s blog. You may find new tips or information, as well as a link to an author interview.

If you bought this ebook from the Take Control website, it has been added to your account, where you can download it in other formats and access any future updates. However, if you bought this ebook elsewhere, you can [add it to your account manually](#); see [Ebook Extras](#).

Basics

Much of what I explain in this book requires you to access your browser preferences (macOS) or Settings (Windows). Here's where to find them:

- **On a Mac:** You may already know that wonderful shortcut to open the Preferences window for any app, including all the browsers I cover in this book: ⌘-comma. Or, choose Preferences from the application menu (the one with the same name as the app).
- **On a PC:** In Chrome, click More ⋮ in the top-right corner of the window and choose Settings from the pop-up menu. In Firefox, click the hamburger ≡ icon in the same location and choose Options from the pop-up menu.

Chrome Tip: For many of the settings you'll need to access in Chrome (including privacy and security settings), scroll down until you see the word Advanced in smallish type. Click that to reveal Chrome's plethora of additional options.

What's New in Version 1.0.1

This version is a minor “bug fix” release to address a number of typos and make some wording changes to improve clarity.

Introduction

Do you really need a book on how to take control of your web browser? After all, if you've used any personal computer, smartphone, or tablet, you've no doubt used a browser. And you've done so because you can do just about anything with it.

In fact, I struggle to think of things your web browser can't do. For example, a browser can't physically build a house. You need an architect and some combination of construction workers and skilled tradespeople, and, of course, land. But you might use a browser to search for land to buy, to narrow down your choice of architect, and to communicate with that architect—initially using a contact form on their site and then by webmail via Gmail or a similar service.

Back in the 1990s when Netscape Navigator first hit the mainstream, most laypeople had little inkling of the countless things a browser could do. But once broadband and Wi-Fi became commonplace, browsers morphed from simple windows of hyperlinks to portals of almost anything you can think of for almost anyone to access.

Much of this has to do with browsers' simplicity of design. Consider YouTube. Before it existed, how did you access and watch videos? You bought software that worked with your operating system, using the file format your operating system could read and made sure it stayed updated. If you couldn't read the video you had, you needed to buy another app that could convert the video to your format.

In contrast, today you play a YouTube video through your browser, using the same standard HTML5 encoding, regardless of your operating system. You don't have to worry about downloading and converting files. The video is there for you to watch along with millions of other people—and you can upload your own videos for others to watch, no matter what operating system they use.

Browsers themselves aren't especially complicated, but I've discovered that writing about them is. It could be because you can take so many



different avenues to reach a given point, much in the way you do when clicking links on the internet. In other words, you can approach a topic like, say, the Los Angeles Dodgers from so many angles: MLB.com, Los Angeles Times, a blog post about the team, Yelp reviews, and so forth.

Similarly, I found in my first draft of this book that the same things were popping up in multiple sections. Take internet ads. Would they fall under the [Solve Browser Annoyances](#) chapter? The [Safeguard Your Browsing](#) one? [Extend Your Browser](#)?

Most how-to books, including most books in the [Take Control](#) series, tell you you'll get the most out of them by reading them from beginning to end. *This book is an exception.* If you read it in order, you will learn a lot about making the most of your web browser. But if you treat this book the way you treat a typical webpage—flitting around to whatever area that interests you or gives you trouble—you will also get a lot out of it! So, take advantage of the ample number of links this book provides and treat it like your own web browser of sorts!

A couple of things to keep in mind: This book is geared toward more recent versions of macOS, most obviously Mojave and High Sierra, and Windows. Browsers work more or less the same in both operating systems, although I will point out any differences when they come up.

Note: When I say Windows in this book, I mean Windows 10. It's almost 2020, and if you aren't using Microsoft's newest and safest operating system, you may be beyond our help—and if you're using Windows XP, please close this ebook and upgrade. Now.

Second, this book focuses primarily on desktop browsers, with some discussion of mobile browsers (see [Work with Your Desktop and Mobile Browsers](#)). I limited the focus because your web browser is usually the first, if not the only thing, you open on your desktop, while mobile devices tend to focus on apps (many of which are wrappers for browsers, but that's another story) rather than browsers. As a result, more pain comes with desktop browsing just by virtue of the fact that you're more dependent on them.



Browser Quick Start

You can read this book in any order you like, jumping from topic to topic just as you would on the web. You may, however, find it helpful to read [Learn the Differences Among Web Browsers](#) first as it provides some basic information about browsers that is referenced throughout the book.

Learn the basics:

- Discover how browsers compare to one another and make a smart choice about which one(s) you use; see [Learn the Differences Among Web Browsers](#).
- Work effectively with lots of websites at once; see [Manage Your Tabs and Windows](#).
- Find what you're looking for on the web more quickly and easily; see [Search the Web](#).

Solve common problems:

- Maintain your privacy and security as you browse the web; see [Safeguard Your Browsing](#).
- Eliminate hassles and problems as you use your browser; see [Solve Browser Annoyances](#).

Take your browsing to the next level:

- Configure your browser (and your brain) for optimal efficiency; see [Browse More Efficiently](#).
- Use extensions to give your browser powerful new capabilities; see [Extend Your Browser](#).

Make better use of the browser in your pocket or purse:

- Move between desktop and mobile browsers with ease; see [Work with Your Desktop and Mobile Browsers](#).

Learn the Differences Among Web Browsers

As I discussed in the [Introduction](#), people use browsers for an infinite number of tasks. And often they use different browsers for certain groups of tasks. For example, I use Safari for most of my browsing because it's to my mind cleaner and faster, but I use Google Chrome for certain web-based apps because its wealth of extensions (see [Extend Your Browser](#) for more information about selecting and using extensions) makes using these apps easier, and because certain websites, particularly those related to my health and retirement plans, work better in Chrome (see [The “Optimized for Chrome” Problem](#), which discusses this frustrating situation). And while I don't use Firefox regularly, it's a fast, secure option, particularly for Windows users or anyone who doesn't want to participate in the Google data-slurping ecosystem.

Despite the differences in features, Safari, Chrome, and Firefox (as well as other browsers I mention in [The Next Tier of Browsers](#)) work in the same basic way. They act as containers for information and actions and work as conduits to more information and actions.

Anatomy of Your Browser Window

Most web browser windows have the same general structure (**Figure 1**). They have a page title, typically in the tab bar (see [Manage Your Tabs and Windows](#)). That tab bar in most browsers has the tabs facing up like physical file folders, with Safari being a notable exception. The address bar, which shows you the address of the page you're on, as well as a place where you can type in search keywords, sits below the tab bar (see [Type Search Terms in the Address Bar](#) for the keyboard shortcuts to quickly enter search terms or a URL).



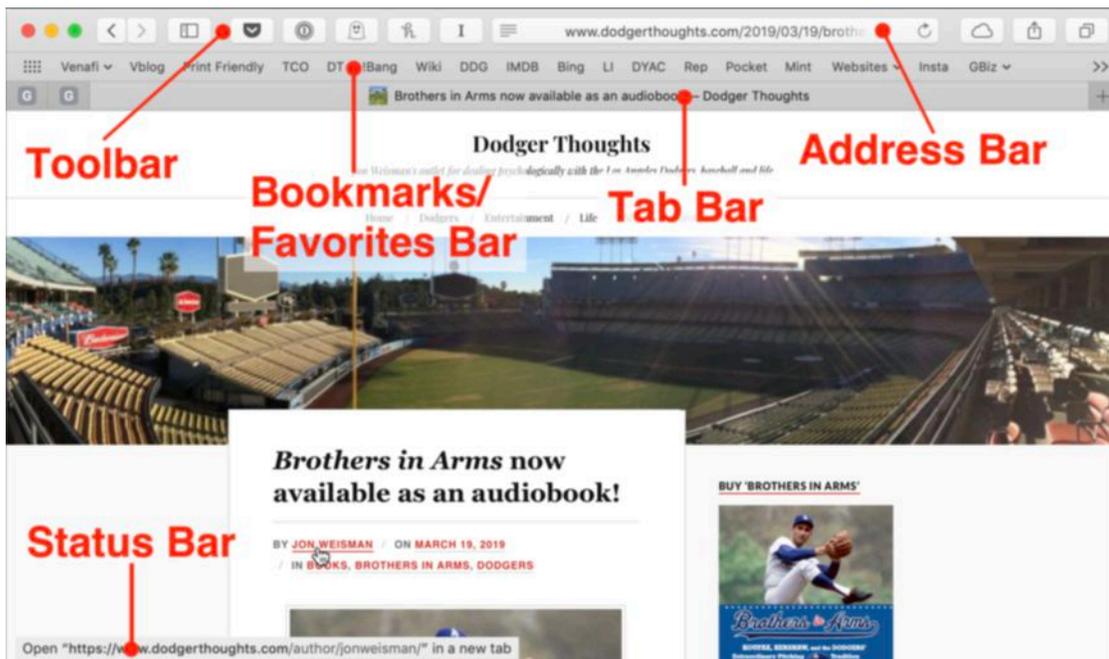


Figure 1: A typical browser window.

Note: By default, Safari shows only the top-level domain name, not the full URL. To show the full address, choose Safari > Preferences > Advanced and check “Show full website address.” I recommend you do this because that way you can check a URL to make sure you haven’t accidentally landed on a phishing site, something you can’t always tell just by looking at the top-level domain (see [Avoid Fraudulent Websites](#) later in this book).

The toolbar is on the same level as the address bar, where you can access useful tools and extensions (see [Extend Your Browser](#) for more information). The bookmarks bar (called the Favorites bar in Safari, and the Bookmarks Toolbar in Firefox) is below that and shows the names of the bookmarks and, in some cases, the icons to those sites.

Note: Safari 12, which comes with macOS Mojave (and may be downloaded for High Sierra and Sierra) is the first version of Apple’s browser that shows favicons (or site-specific icons) on tabs, a feature long available in Chrome and Firefox. If you are using Safari 12 and *don’t* see tab icons, go to the Tabs pane in Safari preferences and make sure “Show website icons in tabs” is checked.



The main window contains the contents of the webpage, of course. At the bottom of that window, you find the status bar, which typically

reveals itself as an overlay only when you mouse over a link. And Safari, for example, doesn't activate the status bar at all unless you set it to show. To activate it, choose View > Show Status Bar. Alternatively, you can toggle the status bar on and off by using ⌘-/.

The Big Three Browsers

While most browsers share the same basic arrangement, they vary in features, extensibility, and look. No browser is the “right” browser for everyone—or even for every task you do.

Dozens of different browsers exist, but I'm going to focus this book on three for the most part (although I briefly touch on a few others later in this chapter; see [The Next Tier of Browsers](#) and [Wait! What About Microsoft?](#)). They are the three most popular browsers (well, that have been in active development within the last 10 years; see [Internet Explorer \(IE\): Don't Use It!](#) later in this chapter), and most any other browser you use has something in common with these three.

Chrome: Earth's Most Popular Browser

If you're like [two-thirds of desktop browser users](#), you are using [Chrome](#) (see **Figure 2**). Of the big three web browsers, Chrome is actually the baby of the group, its inaugural version having been released in 2008. Chrome's reputation for stability—and its integration with Google's app ecosystem, including Google Docs, Gmail, and Chromebooks, which are used by [more than half of all U.S. schools](#)—has launched it into the browser stratosphere.



Figure 2: Palm Springs in Chrome.

Chrome also is known for its [exhaustive catalog of extensions](#) (learn more about extensions in the [Extend Your Browser](#) chapter later in this book). These extensions can transform the web apps you use, the way you use tabs or shop online, or help with daily tasks, among so many other things.

At the same time, Chrome has a sketchy reputation for [hogging RAM](#) and [sucking the life out of laptop batteries](#). If you're the sort who likes to keep 50 or more tabs open at a time (see [Manage Your Tabs](#) in the next chapter), you may want to think twice before using Chrome as your primary browser.

Also, Google's recent changes in Chrome raise several privacy and security issues. Cryptographer [Matthew Green](#) explains in this important [blog post](#) why he has stopped using Chrome, which used to be his favorite browser.

I recommend reading the entire post. Here's an excerpt to give you an idea what Green is concerned about:

From now on, every time you log into a Google property (for example, Gmail), Chrome will automatically sign the browser into your Google account for you. It'll do this without asking, or even explicitly notifying you. ... If you didn't respect my lack

of consent on the biggest user-facing privacy option in Chrome (and didn't even notify me that you had stopped respecting it!) why should I trust any other consent option you give me? What stops you from changing your mind on that option in a few months, when we've all stopped paying attention?

Moreover, in early 2019, several [tech news sites reported](#) that Google plans to break ad-blockers in future versions of Chrome. While I guess the news shouldn't have been surprising (after all, Google is the single largest server of web ads), it's nevertheless unsettling, given the security and privacy implications of losing the ability to prevent others from tracking your usage.

For my part, I use Chrome for a few web apps and whenever I have to log into my workplace portal, health insurance portal, or retirement account. This may be because as we head toward the third decade of this millennium, many web developers are catering their sites toward Chrome (see [The "Optimized for Chrome" Problem](#) sidebar later in this chapter for more information).

Safari: Surf the Web Apple-Style

Not surprisingly, Apple's [Safari](#) browser (see **Figure 3**) only has a fraction of the market share of Chrome. Although Safari originally had both Windows and Mac versions, it has been a Mac-only browser since 2012. However, the iOS version of Safari edges out Chrome as the top mobile web browser in North America.

How Did Safari Get Its Name?

No one seems to know why Apple named its browser Safari. I've read theories that it matched up with Apple's "big cat" code names for its operating systems at the time it was developed (Jaguar, Panther, Tiger, etc.). Others have surmised that it's a play on the Beach Boys' song "Surfing Safari."

Don Melton, one of Safari's original developers, has offered the only [definitive answer](#), which is no one knows for sure. All he knows is that it was a much better choice than some of the earlier suggestions, including "The Lion and the Mouse."

easy computing

Safari is my default browser because it's optimized for macOS. So, it uses less battery power than Chrome does and is (or at least feels) faster than Chrome. Safari works with only a tiny fraction of extensions compared to Chrome (nor does it offer a way to piggyback on Chrome extensions as do Brave, Opera, and others)—but then, I avoid using extensions unless absolutely necessary (read the sidebar [Create Discrete Web Apps](#) later in this book for a way to circumvent the need for a trillion web app extensions).



Figure 3: Palm Springs in Safari.

Also, because Safari is tightly integrated with macOS, you can take advantage of macOS-specific features such as text shortcuts, AppleScript, and a host of other services (for more information on automating your Mac, read Joe Kissell's [Take Control of Automating Your Mac](#), which helped make my Mac an even greater joy to use). Also, Safari automatically integrates your open tabs, bookmarks, browsing history, and anything you store in iCloud Keychain; and supports Apple's Handoff feature, which lets you move from Safari on the desktop to your iPhone, iPad, or another desktop (see [Work with Your Desktop and Mobile Browsers](#) to learn more about these features).

Finally, Safari provides better privacy and security out of the box. Much of this has to do with Apple's overall stance on [privacy](#) versus



Finally, thank you to my editor and publisher Joe Kissell who (inexplicably?) had faith in me to finish this book under unexpected circumstances. This book would not exist without his help, advocacy, and friendship.

About the Publisher

alt concepts inc., publisher of Take Control Books, is operated by [Joe Kissell](#) and [Morgen Jahnke](#), who acquired the ebook series from TidBITS Publishing Inc.'s owners, Adam and Tonya Engst, in May 2017. Joe brings his decades of experience as author of more than 60 books on tech topics (including many popular Take Control titles) to his role as Publisher. Morgen's professional background is in development work for nonprofit organizations, and she employs those skills as Director of Marketing and Publicity. Joe and Morgen live in San Diego with their two children and their cat.

Credits

- Publisher and editor: Joe Kissell
- Cover design: Sam Schick of [Neversink](#)
- Logo design: Geoff Allen of [FUN is OK](#)

More Take Control Books

This is but one of many Take Control titles, and I'm just one of many Take Control authors! We have books that cover a wide range of technology topics, with extra emphasis on the Mac and other Apple products.

You can buy Take Control books from the [Take Control online catalog](#) as well as from venues such as Amazon and the iBooks Store. But it's a better user experience and our authors earn more when you buy directly from us. Just saying...

Our ebooks are available in three formats: PDF, EPUB, and the Kindle's Mobipocket. All are DRM-free.



Copyright and Fine Print

Take Control of Your Browser

ISBN: 978-1-947282-36-0

Copyright © 2019, Robyn Weisman. All rights reserved.

[alt concepts inc.](#) 4142 Adams Ave. #103-619, San Diego CA 92116, USA

Why Take Control? We designed Take Control electronic books to help readers regain a measure of control in an oftentimes out-of-control universe. With Take Control, we also work to streamline the publication process so that information about quickly changing technical topics can be published while it's still relevant and accurate.

Our books are DRM-free: This ebook doesn't use digital rights management in any way because DRM makes life harder for everyone. So we ask a favor of our readers. If you want to share your copy of this ebook with a friend, please do so as you would a physical book, meaning that if your friend uses it regularly, they should buy a copy. Your support makes it possible for future Take Control ebooks to hit the internet long before you'd find the same information in a printed book. Plus, if you buy the ebook, you're entitled to any free updates that become available.

Remember the trees! You have our permission to make a single print copy of this ebook for personal use, if you must. Please reference this page if a print service refuses to print the ebook for copyright reasons.

Caveat lector: Although the author and alt concepts inc. have made a reasonable effort to ensure the accuracy of the information herein, they assume no responsibility for errors or omissions. The information in this book is distributed "As Is," without warranty of any kind. Neither alt concepts inc. nor the author shall be liable to any person or entity for any special, indirect, incidental, or consequential damages, including without limitation lost revenues or lost profits, that may result (or that are alleged to result) from the use of these materials. In other words, use this information at your own risk.

It's just a name: Many of the designations in this ebook used to distinguish products and services are claimed as trademarks or service marks. Any trademarks, service marks, product names, or named features that appear in this title are assumed to be the property of their respective owners. All product names and services are used in an editorial fashion only, with no intention of infringement. No such use, or the use of any trade name, is meant to convey endorsement or other affiliation with this title.

We aren't Apple: This title is an independent publication and has not been authorized, sponsored, or otherwise approved by Apple Inc. Because of the nature of this title, it uses terms that are registered trademarks or service marks of Apple Inc. If you're into that sort of thing, you can view a [complete list of registered trademarks and service marks](#).