

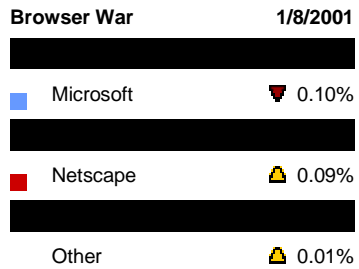
## Browser Information as of January 8, 2001.

Statistics according to <http://browserwatch.internet.com/stats/icstats.html>:

Browser	Value	Percent
Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.x	175198051	71%
Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.x	33361033	13%
Netscape 4.x	24924783	10%
Netscape Compatible	4256981	1%
Unknown User Agents	2640170	1%
Microsoft Internet Explorer 2.x	1080648	0.44%
Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.x	847109	0.35%
Netscape 3.x	819525	0.34%
Netscape 5.x	751708	0.31%
Opera x.x	465122	0.19%
<i>Updated January 1, 2001</i>		

According to <http://www.statmarket.com/>:

### Browser War



### Other Windows on the Web

By DAVID POGUE

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/04/technology/04STAT.html?0104ci>

Are you a geek? Take this enjoyable self-test in the comfort of your own home. Just answer a single question: How many Web browsers can you name?

0: You've been out of the country for a few years, haven't you?

1-2: Very good; you probably named the Big Two, Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator.

3-4: Impressive; you're well along the road to geekhood.

30 or more: You must be Brian Proffitt, custodian of BrowserWatch.com, the world headquarters for Web browsers.

Microsoft's lawyers would probably point to the existence of dozens of alternative browsers as proof that Internet Explorer has no monopoly, but don't be fooled. According to statistics kept by the University of Illinois, only about 6 percent of the Web's visitors use any browser other than the Big Two.

Still, those 6 percent may be on to something. By choosing an off-brand browser, you can reap rewards in speed and simplicity. You dodge the bugginess of Netscape Navigator 6 and the feeling of slavery some people feel when using Microsoft's browser. And if your older PC lacks the copious memory, processor and disk-space demands of the Big Two, these alternative programs may be just the ticket.

It's easy to see, for example, why Opera 5.0.1 for Windows, written by a pair of Norwegian programmers, has developed such an enthusiastic following. (Mac and Linux versions are still in the testing stage.) Until you've experienced how fast this program makes Web pages appear, you're hereby forbidden from complaining about the speed of your Internet connection.

Opera offers the usual assortment of features (e-mail, address book, newsgroup reading, Internet chat) and Web standards (Java, JavaScript, 128-bit encryption for secure online banking, cascading style sheets, and so on). But what makes it special is a vast array of unusual and original features that make the Web more useful and less annoying.

For example, the program can remember the Web page you last visited, so that your next browsing session picks up where you left off. The program also offers a number of clever, single-key shortcuts that immediately become second nature. Press the letter G, for example, to hide all graphics for a speed boost; press the plus or minus key to magnify or reduce the entire page, graphics and all.

Opera is also among the most customizable browsers. The options on its Preferences screen scroll on almost as long as the yellow text at the beginning of "Star Wars." They bestow unheard-of control over the acceptance and automatic disposal of cookies (preference documents that Web sites deposit on your hard drive) along with on-off switches for every scrap of window dressing that eats into your Web-page area — menus, buttons, scroll bars and the like.

Unlike the Big Two browsers, Opera lacks the backing of a billion-dollar company. Therefore, in an effort to stay financially afloat, its maker offers two versions of Opera at [www.opera.com](http://www.opera.com): a free edition with blinking ads in one corner and a \$40, ad-free version. (Even in the free version, though, the customization-obsessed Norwegian

programmers couldn't stop themselves: One preference screen lets you turn off the blinking, and another lets you specify what kind of ads you'd like to see.)

NeoPlanet 5.2, which is free at [www.neoplanet.com](http://www.neoplanet.com), also has ardent fans, thanks primarily to its library of more than 500 colorful design schemes — skins, in Net jargon — that you can download and apply to it. The skins are arranged in 27 categories ranging from Metallic and Anime to Kid Stuff and Horror. (In theory, Navigator 6 offers the same feature, but at this early stage, only six measly skins are available, and they can't touch the coolness of NeoPlanet skins.) But NeoPlanet doesn't just look much better than the Big Two browsers; its commands and options read better, too. Who could resist a program that offers options like "Show Fancy Graphic Effects" and "Modem Speed Booster"?

Note, however, that although NeoPlanet looks and feels like a self-contained browser, it requires that your machine also have Internet Explorer, whose technology does all the heavy lifting. That piggybacking effect explains NeoPlanet's long list of compatibility features (Java, Flash, RealVideo, and so on), as well as its convenient ability to import your Internet Explorer bookmarks and e-mail settings.

That's also why NeoPlanet is slightly slower than Internet Explorer; it needs an extra second here and there to grab information from the Internet Explorer underpinnings. (NeoPlanet's dependence on Internet Explorer may also diminish its appeal for those dreaming of a Microsoft-free Internet.)

On the Macintosh, there's less urgency for a counterculture browser; Mac fans already have an excellent browser in Internet Explorer 5 for the Mac, which teems with smart features that Microsoft hasn't gotten around to adding to the Windows version. One example: a Scrapbook button that memorizes the complete Web page you're viewing. The snapshots are yours to keep, even when the actual Web page changes or vanishes — great for e-commerce order summaries.

But if you'd prefer something Opera-like for the Mac — fast, compact and European — consider iCab 2.3, released this month in a free preview form. Whenever you're reading a Web page, iCab quietly begins to download whatever pages are linked to it, in readiness for your next move — an extremely considerate gesture that can result in big speed gains. As with Opera, iCab also excels in customization and privacy options, and it understands most standard Web languages (although cascading style sheets, if you care, won't appear until its \$30 final version is ready).

iCab's most radical feature is one that Microsoft and Netscape wouldn't touch with a 10-foot fiber-optic cable: a check box that makes Web-page ads disappear. You see blank rectangles in their places and get another huge speed boost, since iCab is spared the task of downloading the ad graphics. Of course, advertising makes the Web go round. But there's no denying the joy of reading a Web page without the distraction of blinking or brightly colored come-ons.

Note, however, that this feature isn't exactly labeled "Turn off ads"; iCab's programmer is probably a bit nervous about the reaction of Web advertisers who are perfectly capable of finding out where he lives. Instead, this option is buried on a preference screen, masquerading as a check box called "Filter graphics by size." But by happy coincidence,

the image sizes it offers to hide, like 468 x 60 pixels, turn out to be the standard sizes for banner ads and the like.

Opera, NeoPlanet and iCab are among the best of the maverick browsers, but they'll soon have even more competition. Netscape Navigator 6 is only the first product of a worldwide volunteer programming collaboration called the Mozilla project (with headquarters at [www.mozilla.org](http://www.mozilla.org)). Other browsers, based on the same underlying technology, have already begun to emerge; for example, a Mozilla- based, Internet Explorer-free version of NeoPlanet is already in development.

Moreover, the Mozilla group plans to complete its own browser in 2001; the world has every right to hold high hopes for a browser created by a pool of talented programmers who labor without a single marketing or accounting executive on the premises.

Nonetheless, the creators of any alternative browser clearly have their work cut out; trying to introduce a new Web browser in this day and age is about as easy as trying to establish a new airline, political party or diet cola.

But whether their efforts to compete with the Big Two stems from idealism or sheer folly, what matters is that we, the citizens of the Internet, have a choice, and that's a good thing no matter how you look at it. Here's hoping that two years from now, the Big Two will have become the Big Five or Six.

### ***Related Sites***

These sites are not part of The New York Times on the Web, and The Times has no control over their content or availability.

- [www.neoplanet.com](http://www.neoplanet.com)
- [www.mozilla.org](http://www.mozilla.org)

## **Browser wars, part two**

Dec 14th 2000

From The Economist print edition

[http://www.economist.com/printedition/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Story\\_ID=449249](http://www.economist.com/printedition/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Story_ID=449249)

REMEMBER the browser wars, when Netscape and Microsoft fought for dominance of the web? For a while, each rushed out ever more complex browsers in the software equivalent of an arms race. In the end, Microsoft prevailed by bundling its browser with its Windows operating system.

That fight may, however, prove to have been just a warm-up. Now a new browser war is under way, as software firms compete to provide the browsers for “information appliances” such as set-top boxes, handheld computers and smart phones. Such devices are still in their infancy, but they are widely expected eventually to outnumber PCs. So the stakes in this new browser war are high. And this time round, the battlefield looks very different.

For a start, Microsoft is almost nowhere to be seen. Its strongest weapon in the desktop browser wars—the ability to include new software as part of Windows, and thus ensure its installation on millions of PCs—no longer works. Microsoft's cut-down version of

Windows for appliances has been a flop, and the firm's strategy of tying its browser to its operating system is no help if that system is not dominant. But Netscape, which is now part of AOL, is still very much in the running, alongside dozens of rivals including Opera, OpenTV, Lineo, QNX and Pico.

Another difference is that the appliance makers and service providers (such as cable-TV and mobile-phone companies) will decide which browser comes installed on a particular device. On a PC, a new browser can be downloaded and installed with a few clicks. Not so with appliances, whose users will have no choice in the matter. Rival browser makers are thus courting appliance makers and service providers, rather than trying to woo users. To maximise its chances in this beauty contest, a browser must be fast and work with many different kinds of hardware.

With so many firms in the race, it seems unlikely that any browser will win a dominant share. The resulting diversity will mean that, for everything to work properly, it will be vital that web pages and the browsers that display them conform to the technical standards laid down by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). So browser makers are rushing to show how well-behaved their software is. Contrast this with the old Microsoft-Netscape battle, when both firms added proprietary extensions to existing web standards in an attempt to lock in users.

Netscape claims that its software, called Gecko, is the most standards-compliant browser around. Jon Stephenson von Tetzchner, Opera's boss, makes a similar claim about his firm. The problem, he says, is that only 5% of web pages comply with W3C standards. Most are designed to look good on Netscape's or Microsoft's old browsers, rather than playing by the rules. On December 6th, Opera said it will offer the Windows version of its browser free. The idea, says Mr von Tetzchner, is to increase Opera's market share and to encourage web designers to look beyond the "big two" browsers to a more diverse future.

This is just one of the many subtle links between the old and new browser wars. Netscape's new strategy is similarly informed by its bruising previous encounter with Microsoft. By making Gecko freely available, and encouraging its use with the free Linux operating system, it hopes to allow appliance makers to avoid "vendor lock-in". Netscape does not benefit directly from this strategy, but the result is to make it hard for any single firm (ie, Microsoft) to establish a stranglehold on the market. Although the new browser wars are very different from the old, in some respects little has changed.

## **Amaya 4.2.1 Released**

World Wide Web Consortium, [www.w3.org](http://www.w3.org)

22 December 2000

[Amaya](#) is W3C's free Web browser and authoring tool, used to demonstrate and test new Web protocols and data formats. People who downloaded the short-lived version 4.2 are advised to install 4.2.1. [Download Amaya](#) binaries for Unix and Windows NT/95/98. [Source code](#) and a [new features history](#) are available.

<http://www.w3.org/Amaya/User/BinDist.html>

## Other Browsers

- [Amaya](#)
- [Arachne](#)
- [HotJava](#)
- [Lynx](#)
- [Mosaic](#)
- [NeoPlanet](#)
- [Opera](#)
- [1X Browser](#)