

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This month's question is: "Can I use another browser besides Internet Explorer? If so, what are my choices?"

Yes, you can use another browser. There are three main contenders for Internet Explorer. Here is a list of the top four browsers by market share; Internet Explorer (IE) (88.6%), Firefox (6.7%), Netscape (1.8%), and Opera (0.5%). While Internet Explorer still has the largest market share, it has been losing its lead to these three contenders.

If you choose to use one of the contenders I would recommend that you keep Internet Explorer installed on your computer. The reason for this is due to its market share and the fact that many web sites and web applications are developed using components that are specifically for Internet Explorer, such as ActiveX components, VB script and proprietary HTML tags. Some of the contenders have difficulty with IE-specific code. Opera will not interpret it; Firefox will interpret the HTML tags but not the ActiveX components nor the VB script; and Netscape has given up trying. Of the three Netscape does allow you to choose either the Netscape or the IE rendering engine.

Another reason to stick with IE is the great variety of business add-ons available for it. Also, IE offers much more integration with desktop software, such as the Microsoft Office applications.

If you're using IE for web surfing only, I'd say go ahead and try one of the other three with Firefox being my first choice. If you're using IE with business applications or you have web sites you visit that require IE, stick with IE or at least keep a copy on your computer.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer too, please forward them to me. My email address is meggert@wi.rr.com, my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.