

Firefox Add-ons

Plug-ins

Things like Adobe Reader, Flash, QuickTime. These used to be available via the 'Add-ons' page. Now, Mozilla relies on routines built into Firefox to detect that you don't have a plug-in that's needed for the content of the web page you've selected. It will flash up a warning message and install on a click.

In theory!

It never seems to work for me on my Ubuntu Linux boxes and I always end up having to install manually. I suspect that this is due to the way Ubuntu 'customises' Firefox. I can't, for example, 'Check for Updates' on the 'Help menu – it's greyed out. Instead, I get updates through the Ubuntu Update Manager.

Users of Firefox on MS-Windows may have more luck, I guess. Firefox is now so popular that the plug-in home pages contain 'how-to' instructions and Firefox links to these rather than having its own special page.

Extensions

A vast array of 'scratched itches'. Things like NoScript. Their popularity, and the traction it gave Firefox in the 'browser wars', forced Microsoft to introduce a similar facility in IE7 (together with another innovation popularised by Firefox – tabbed windows).

The most difficult part of handling extensions is choosing which ones to install – there are so many.

Tools > Add-ons > Get Extensions

(if it exists on your menu) takes you to the Extensions website:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/>

on the left there is a box with a list of categories, which helps to narrow down the choice. On the right, there is a box with a list of recommended extensions and another list of the most popular extensions. When searching by category, you have the option of viewing by name, date, number of downloads or rating.

Note that each extension has a short description page that contains useful information such as the number of downloads, star rating and number of reviews/comments. Clicking on the extension name takes you to the full page which contains the author's detailed description of what the extension does and the full set of comments/reviews (some of which are revealing, amusing or off-putting). Another pointer is that recommended extensions have 'recommended' in a box at the top left of the short description. Extensions under development are marked 'experimental' in the same position and coloured differently – you have been warned! (When searching by category the default view excludes experimental extensions.)

However, it's so easy to install/uninstall extensions that I tend to try things that look interesting and remove them if they don't do what I want. A good time-waster!

There are so many extensions that sometimes one will interfere with another.

Firefox Add-ons

I have, on my Linux box (in alphabetical order):

- **Adblock Filterset.G Updater**
- **Adblock Plus**
- Download Status Bar (shows downloads as a neat bar, rather than a pop-up window)
- FasterFox (tweaks to speed up Firefox)
- Firebug (checks pages for compliance with web programming standards)
- Image Zoom
- MediaPlayerConnectivity (allows you to use different players for different types of content and gets round a problem with playing BBC radio with RealPlayer)
- **NoScript** (blocks Java and other scripts, including cross-scripting which might be a path for introducing malware)
- PDF Download (gives more options for dealing with PDFs linked to web pages)
- **Verisign EV Green Bar Extension** (NEW – colours the URL bar green if the site is a genuine 'signed' one. Publicised by PayPal to block various 'phishing' scams.)

Others that look interesting, but I haven't installed yet:

- FoxyTunes (for controlling multimedia content)
- Foxmarks (for synchronising bookmarks across a number of computers)
- iMacros (for automating repetitive tasks e.g. the calling up the websites you always visit)
- FlashGot (for downloading several items with a single click)