

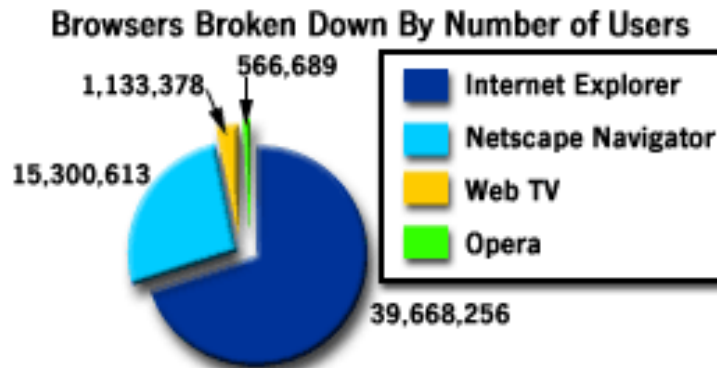
Cross Browser Compatibility

While Internet Explorer dominates the browser population, for a web site to be broadly accessible by the public consideration and testing in other browsers is vital.

Cross Browser Compatibility

Why?

While the Internet Explorer browser dominates the market (by some reports an estimated 95% of all web users have some version of IE), and even among this there are numerous versions, there are at last report more than 700 browser variations in use. If your web site must be broadly viewable by visitors, you certainly do not want to eliminate what may be a valuable portion of the public—especially if your site intends to sell products and services.



We strongly recommend testing your site in multiple browsers such as Netscape 4 and 6, IE 5 and 6, AOL (4, 6 and 8), Mozilla and Opera, and if

possible different platforms.

We use these ourselves to understand the differences in how a browser renders text, links and page layout elements to assure the broadest possible use of sites we design. Note that in some situations browser population is controlled (example in an Extranet) and this is much less of an issue. Additionally, some text-based browsers can have problems with certain design elements and full text-based alternative pages may be needed – a common situation with federal government web sites.

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We also explore web-accessibility issues, such as those required by law for federal government web sites, using tools such AccVerify and IBM's voice-enabled browser.

We also need to mention that site visitors don't just use PCs. PCs may dominate the market, but there's over five million people who use the Internet via a different platform. Apples still make up 12% of the market. WebTV is also growing in popularity, especially among the elderly and disabled - two groups who are big consumers on the Internet.

Be Careful

It is tempting to copy and paste information developed in desktop applications, such as MS Word, into web pages but be aware that some interesting problems can be introduced to your web page without your being aware of it. As an example, MS Word uses XML and special Word formatting controls to produce tables and the like. If your audience is limited to the latest versions of IE this won't necessarily pose a problem, but for the public it can.

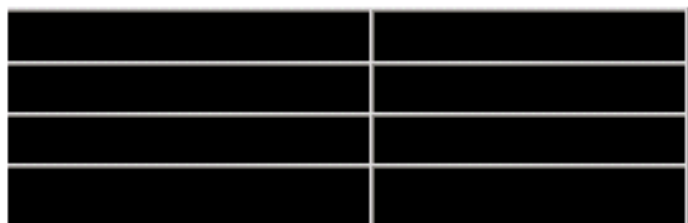
As a for instance consider this simple table in IE and Netscape (below). While both are centered within the page, note that Netscape cannot render the XML and Word-specific formatting and shows up (in this case) as simply black—not exactly what the developer would want. Even more interestingly, Opera while rendering the table well, will ignore the Word-specific formatting that centers it within the page. Obviously, this problem can be solved by removing these specific codes and using proper HTML tags and syntax to form the table.

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Centered Table in Internet Explorer with XML and Word-formatting

Same Table in Netscape



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