

Brave 1.0 review: This excellent, privacy-focused browser can make you money, too

By Mark Hachman, Senior Editor, PCWorld, | NOV 13, 2019

Abridged Version

Brave's browser delivers excellent performance

Like many browsers today, including the new Microsoft Edge, the Brave browser is built upon Chromium, the foundation of Google Chrome. Brave tweaked the open-source Chromium code, including weeding out the Google-specific code that ties the browser to Google Web services. Brave runs extensions from the Chrome Web Store, though it will warn you if it thinks you're installing a dodgy one.

By now, browsers absolutely have to be free and extremely simple to configure. Brave easily clears the first hurdle, though setup is a subtly complex process. It's easy to get up and running fast, but Brave's more advanced features require some fiddling. Brave slurped up my favorites, websites, passwords, and other necessities from Chrome, however, and had me browsing happily in just a minute or so.

Performance is also table stakes, and the Brave browser is right in the middle of the pack. The distinctions are so slight, however, you'll probably never notice a shift in performance between one browser and another.

Brave blocks ads natively, like another niche browser, Opera, which should help both browsers reduce their memory and CPU load. Still, for those who don't tune their browsers with ad blockers and tools to block scripts, it's another indication how clean Brave's browser runs by default.

Built for privacy, and more

Whether online or in the virtual world, saying "no" constantly can be exhausting. Brave does it for you, but allows you to reach out and engage with those sites you choose to. We'll talk a bit more about actually rewarding those sites in the next section.

DuckDuckGo, a privacy-minded search engine, is Brave's preferred choice, though you can select whatever you want. Next to each URL in the URL bar is a small "shield" icon, with a Brave lion painted in orange. By default (configurable in the Settings and during setup), shields are "up," like in *Star Trek*. Shields can block third-party sites from tracking you around the Web, like Facebook, or third-party advertising services.

You can prevent scripts from running, though that's not on by default. Cross-site cookies—cookies that help identify you as you move from site to site—are also blocked, as well as the collection of various elements of your PC (your IP address, OS, and CPU string, for example) that can allow an advertiser to guess your identity without a dedicated ID. If there's a secure HTTPS connection, Brave will attempt to connect to it.

Clicking on the "shield" icon summarizes all that Brave is doing it for you, and allows you to option to fine-tune things even further. You'll also notice small icons that may appear from time to time, alerting you that autoplaying videos were blocked automatically. You can block social media, too, including LinkedIn posts or embedded Twitter tweets. All of these are designed to smooth your browsing experience. And yes, ads are blocked automatically, though you can add additional ad blocklists via the Settings menu. It all adds up to a pleasing, ad-free experience.

Brave also understands that there's surfing privately, and then there's surfing privately. Microsoft may have won kudos for the privacy rules it's enforcing within InPrivate Mode within the new Edge, but Brave goes even further. Not only can you open a private window, but you can open an even deeper level of privacy and use the Tor onion-routing network as well. Tor allows you to mask your identity even more securely—and, if you choose, wander through the Darknet, the Web-beneath-the-Web.

Brave's BAT: a wild card that might pay off

But if a browser like Brave seals off all sorts of advertising and ad tracking, how then, does a site like (cough) PCWorld make money? Brave's answer to that is the Basic (why not "Brave"?) Attention Token, or BAT. Set at about 4.38 BAT to the dollar, Brave allows you to make money via ads, as well as ship BAT off to sites or other users. Brave calls this Brave Rewards, in much the same way that Microsoft also allows you to slowly build up stored points though Microsoft Rewards.

AT A GLANCE

Brave's first browser is a fast, lean, browser that takes your privacy seriously. And it can pay you, too, with its blockchain integration.

Pros

- Minimal CPU, memory usage
- Truly built to protect your privacy

Cons

- Unclear how widespread BAT will become
- Signing up to accept BAT requires a ton of info

Read the full review at: <https://tinyurl.com/yjobf5jo>

Or <https://www.pcworld.com/article/3453376/brave-10-review-this-excellent-privacy-focused-browser-can-make-you-money-too.html>