

HMH Guidance for Customers about Web Browsers

Modern HTML and how browsers support it

The modern standard for HTML, the language that web pages are typically written in, is version 5 (HTML5). In an ideal world, customers would hope that any web browser would suffice and provide a satisfactory out-of-the-box experience. Unfortunately, web browsers are not all equal in how well they support modern HTML. Reports like the one published at <http://html5test.com/results/desktop.html> show how well different browsers and browser versions perform. Most modern browsers in their latest version score in the vicinity of 400-450 points on a 500 point scale.

Some browsers come with an auto-update feature, so that users are automatically upgraded to the latest version. With this feature enabled, performance in supporting HTML5 will steadily improve with time. Chrome and Firefox are popular browsers that support this feature.

Problematic browsers

Many customers are simply using the web browser that shipped with their desktop or laptop computer. Others are constrained by policies in their IT department. Be sure to consult with your IT personnel to find out if you are using a modern browser or can be upgraded to one.

As a common example, many of our customers are still using Internet Explorer 8 or 9. These are the versions that shipped by default with Windows XP and Windows 7, respectively. Referring to the same scorecard mentioned above, however, Internet Explorer 9 scores 138 out of 500, and Internet Explorer 8 only scores **42** points out of 500. Customers won't be able to expect a problem-free experience with web content in general using these older, poor-scoring browsers.

Customers using Windows XP and Internet Explorer 8 face a special challenge, as they are unable to upgrade to a newer version of Internet Explorer. Windows XP will no longer be supported by Microsoft as of April 2014, and consequently HMH cannot support it after that date either. Customers using Windows XP will need to upgrade to a more modern operating system and browser to be supported by HMH going forward.

Solutions and workarounds

The simplest solution to such issues is to upgrade your browser to a more modern version, which can usually be done for free. You can also download and use a completely different browser if your IT department will allow that. (HMH fully understands that you must always consult with your IT department about any changes to district-owned computers.) For example, customers with Apple



computers using Safari can install Chrome or Firefox to see an improvement over Safari. Customers using Windows 7 using Internet Explorer 8 or 9 can upgrade to Internet Explorer 10.

For customers presently using Windows XP, there is an additional option for Internet Explorer 8. Google provides a plug-in called Chromeframe, which is available and easily installable at <http://www.google.com/chromeframe>. Chromeframe improves the HTML5 compatibility of these older browsers, improving their scores to the 400 point range out of 500. This plug-in is no longer being actively maintained by Google, because they are encouraging web users to upgrade to a more modern browser, but it is still available for download. HMH does not support either Internet Explorer 8 or 9 unless the Chromeframe plug-in is installed.

Browser settings

If you do install a new web browser, please remember that the out-of-the-box settings are often not optimal for viewing publisher content. For example, permitting JavaScript to run and disabling pop-up blockers are common settings we require. It is entirely possible that customers have correctly changed settings in their older browser, and when they upgrade to a new browser, some features on our websites don't work as expected because the new browser's settings haven't been changed to match. If you encounter any surprises like that, a call to HMH Technical Support (1-800-323-9239, techsupport@hmhco.com) will usually quickly resolve the problem.

Also, consult with your IT personnel to see if any web control software is in place that may affect how HMH content is displayed or accessed. HMH has no way to sense, control, or circumvent that software, so some help from your internal IT experts may solve some issues.