

MyLab Browser Check Test – Final Report

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Executive Summary

The objective of this study was to investigate the usability of a working MyLab browser check prototype. Eight participants were recruited according to pre-defined criteria (balanced user types and preferred Web Browsers).

In general, reactions to the registration process were positive.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- Overall, users like the design and thought it was easy to understand at a glance
- 87.5% (7 of 8) were fine with the button label "Download" as it was a call to action and close enough to resulting sequence
- 50% (4 of 8) expected to see the browser check page auto-refresh upon completing a plug-in installation and show a green check mark; however, most eventually tried closing and reopening the page to see if the status changed
- Users generally understood the term "null", but thought leaving it blank or use other labels (i.e N/A, unknown...) might be better
- Users believe that the green check mark means they are ready to go; not realizing that "version" can still be an issue -- this has a high chance of being a pain point
- Users had no problem noticing the yellow circle and exclamation point in either the upper right settings list or the main body
- Users understood the upper right three options were browser settings rather than plug-ins and seemed to like the separation in the page layout
- User did not appear to have much too trouble turning off the pop-up blocker, though the help text could be more precise
- 80% (4 of 5) of the Firefox users noticed the "Your browser is not supported" message right away; however one (1) was not sure if that meant overall or because of missing plug-ins.
- Some Firefox users hesitated at the line "Download a supported browser:" above the IE and Safari icons since they already had at least one of them installed depending on the PC operating system
- 40% (2 of 5) Firefox users thought they would try using Firefox and only switch browsers if they run into trouble viewing content
- One Apple/Firefox user was surprised that in this era Firefox was not supported
- 100% (3 of 3) Apple users preferred the Firefox browser over Safari, seeing Safari as slow

- One user expected to see a Help or Support option near the top of the page
- Commentary by an instructor that school lab computers may have installation locked or are wiped on a regular basis
- No major response differences between instructors and students noted
- 87.5% (7 of 8) did not know of, or were sure about, which browser could open PDF without Acrobat Reader installed

For more information, see the Findings section.

Methodology

USABILITY TEST DESCRIPTION

The test plan (see Appendix A, Test Plan) was developed by Enlie Wang, Stuart Ough, Rich Buttiglieri and Craig Marcus. The browser check prototype page was developed by Craig Marcus.

Sessions were conducted remotely by the LTG usability team (Enlie Wang, Stuart Ough, and Stephen Goforth) and were observed by Craig Marcus. Participants were asked to sign a waiver (see Appendix B, Usability Participants Waiver) and complete a background information survey (see Appendix C, Background Information Survey) before the study. Each session lasted approximately 30 minutes and was recorded using Techsmith's Morae software and the WebEx recording feature. During the session the participants were asked to open their preferred browser, view the browser check page, and complete the steps they felt were necessary to prepare their browser for using the MyLab product.

Recorded sessions can be found at the LTG UX Group website:

http://ux.pearsoned.com/research/usability/usability_studies/Browser%20Check/index.html

Login credentials to access this page are:

- Username: design_web
- Password: pearson

PARTICIPANTS

Eight (8) users participated in this study. They were recruited using internal contacts held by the LTG usability team. Participants were pre-selected according to following criteria:

Preferred Web Browser	Participants	
	Students	Instructors
IE	2	2
Firefox	2	2

Student participants received a \$25 honorarium (American Express gift card) for their time. Instructors received a \$50 honorarium (American Express gift card) for their time.

The following table summarizes the participants' demographic profile (*):

	Instructors	Students
Age:	Average = 53.25 years	Average = 27.25 years

	StdDev = 11.70 years	StdDev = 7.80 years
Gender:	Female = 2 (50%) Male = 2 (50%)	Female = 2 (50%) Male = 2 (50%)
Hours on PC per day:	Average = 6 hours StdDev = .82 hours	Average = 6 hours StdDev = 3.74 hours
Primary operating system	Windows = 2 (40%) Apple = 2 (40%)	Windows = 2 (50%) Apple = 1 (25%) Other = 1 (25%)
Preferred web browser	Internet Explorer = 1 (25%) Firefox = 3 (75%)	Internet Explorer = 2 (50%) Firefox = 2 (50%)

It is worth pointing out that among the 3 Apple user's 100% (3 of 3) preferred Firefox over the native Apple OS browser, Safari

DATA COLLECTION

For each session, the user connected remotely using the WebEx conference tool. Screen activity and audio was recorded using TechSmith's Morae software. The users' demographic information was collected using online profile survey before each evaluation.

Participants were asked to give initial reactions to the MyLab homepage design. They were then directed to open the browser check window and attempt to work through the page. Participants were asked questions during the process and encouraged to use a talk-aloud protocol. A review of each session recording was conducted using TechSmith Morae Manager tool to capture approximate error rates, participant quotes, and general observations.

TESTING ENVIRONMENT

The remote participants' computing environment:

URL of the tested website:	http://browsertuneupdev.pearsoncmg.com/pegasus
Computer platform:	Windows PC or Apple
Web browser:	Participants were asked to use Firefox or Internet Explorer
Screen resolution:	Participants used their own settings
Remote testing software:	WebEx

Connection speed:	High-speed required (actual speed unknown)
Audio:	Any phone line with hands-free capability

The facilitator's computing environment:

Computer platform:	Windows desktop PC
Web browser:	IE 8
Screen resolution:	1280x800
Operating system:	Windows 7
Remote testing software:	WebEx + TechSmith Morae Recorder
Connection speed:	LAN
Audio:	NEC speaker phone + Intercall

Findings

SEVERITY RATINGS:

High – These are the most severe issues. Issues at this level prevent users from completing a specific task or from completing their test. These issues should receive the greatest attention.

Medium – These issues make completing a task more difficult. If medium issues occur on frequently used elements of the application, they should be addressed as high severity level issues.

Low – These are the least offensive issues. Low severity issues are ones that relate to interface enhancements. Addressing these issues could make the application easier to use.

N/A – These are items of interest only; patterns that were noticed. Watch and discuss these items and their impact on systems as environments and standards change.

Task/Issue	Severity	General Finding
VERSION CONTROL	High	Green check implies ready, no feedback on version compatibility
BROWSER CHECK PAGE: FIREFOX	Medium	User may ignore or miss compatibility warning

WIMBA VOICE CHECK	Medium	Make Test link an action, remove Wimba Voice from page
BROWSER CHECK REFRESH	Medium	Users expect auto-refresh
GET STARTED BOX	Low	Might be too low on page, do initial check on home page
IE/SAFARI SETTINGS	Low	Make the icon clickable as well as link
SUPPORT LINK	Low	Noticed, but suggest second link in header
TERMINOLOGY	Low	Download is fine; instead of null, leave blank
FIRST IMPRESSIONS	N/A	Favorable, easy to understand
BROWSER WARS	N/A	Less than 50% now use IE or Safari
PLUG-IN INSTALLATION	N/A	Confusion on installs being specific or across browser in the system

POSITIVE COMMENTS

Users liked the overall design of the browser check page and thought it was easy to understand at a glance. Comments when asked how the process was overall include:

- "I'm color blind and it still has enough contrast." - Debra.
- "Wasn't painful. Very easy." - David Si.
- "Pretty straight forward process" - Patricia.
- "Wouldn't change anything." - Whitney.
- "It was pretty easy actually. They have everything for your and they check it off if you have it." - Victoria.

CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS

While the overall impression was favorable, users had some constructive comments as well.

- "Fine, I worry that students couldn't install plugins on school computers." - David S.
- "A little surprising since Firefox has been around so long. Firefox would be preferable to use over Safari. I'm surprised by some of the plugins being used (Shockwave) ... old tech" - Matt
- "I would like to see a browser test on the main page. The pop-up blocker is clickable, but confusing. This is a pain." - John I.
- "When a student logs off a school computer, it wipes it clean." - John I.

HOME PAGE – FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Severity: N/A

The majority of users stated they first noticed the person in the picture and/or the area with the picture in general. The top three areas stated were:

1. The picture of the person
2. The left side navigation
3. The Getting Started box

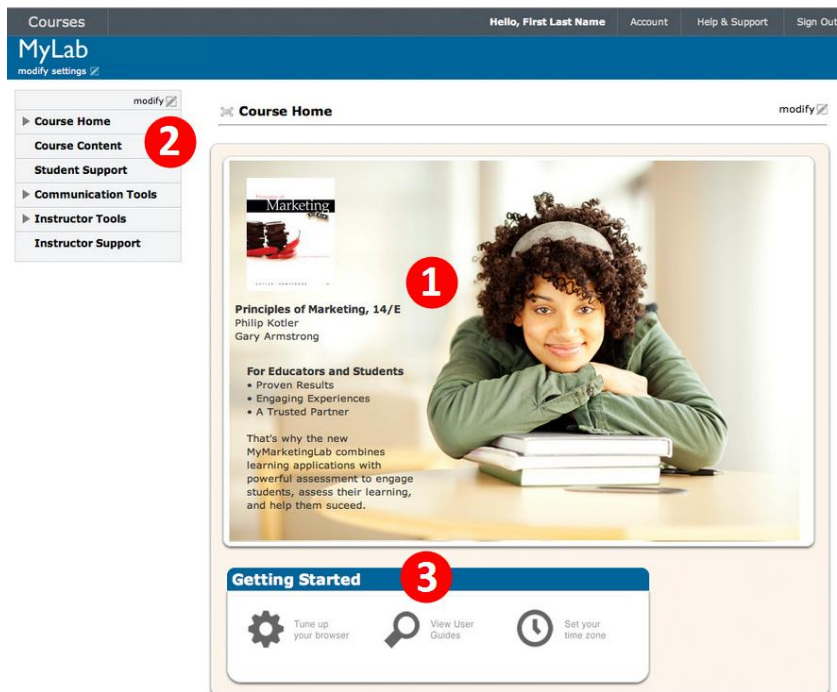


Figure 1: Home page first impressions

Recommendations:

- None

HOME PAGE – GETTING STARTED

Severity: Low

The Getting Started box was listed among the first items noticed during the initial review of the MyLab homepage prototype. *One caveat is that the user could not click on the page options, whereby removing the chance they move deeper into the site before noticing the Getting Started area.*

Once noticed, participants appreciated the three options within the box. People also generally understood the phrase “Tune up your browser” to a level they were not surprised by the page once opened.

When asked how likely they would be to click on the “Tune up” option based on their perceived understanding of what it lead to, 25% (2 of 8) of participants were direct and stated they would not click it; instead they would just try using the online course first and return to Getting Started only if they ran into trouble viewing content. Therefore, based on current browser usage statistics (see below), it is conceivable that a number of Firefox and Chrome users would not see a browser compatibility warning located on the popup until after they had begun using the MyLab product to some extent.

It was suggested by two (2) participants that the main page itself have a high-level browser status check, that way the person knew whether they needed to use the “tune up” option or not.

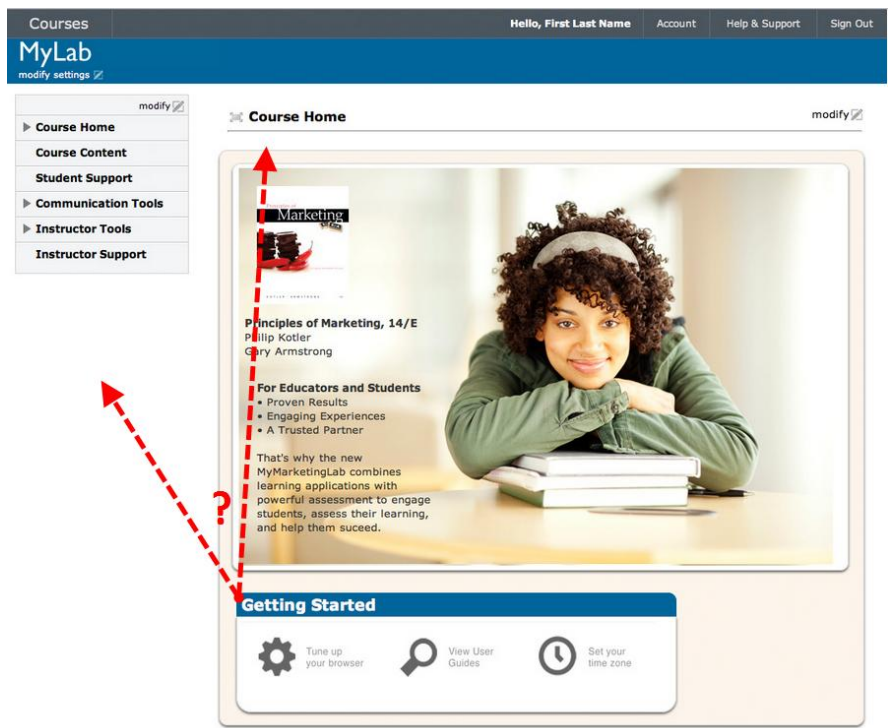


Figure 2: MyLab home page

Recommendations:

- Do a check from the home page and display a warning icon if their browser is not up-to-date or is incompatible. Give a concise explanations of what action needs to be taken and why.
- Consider moving the Getting Started element to insure it appears above the fold, perhaps even on the left side column

BROWSER CHECK PAGE – VERSION CONTROL

Severity: High

Users believe that the green check mark means they are ready to go; not realizing that “version” can still be an issue. This has a high chance of being a pain point as users believe they are fully compatible, only to potentially run into version incompatibility issues later on.

Recommendations:

- Add required version for each plug-in, and only give Green check mark for the plug-ins that have met the minimal version requirement

BROWSER CHECK PAGE - REFRESH

Severity: Medium

50% (4 of 8) of users expected to see the page auto-refresh upon closing the plug-in install page and show a green check mark; however, most eventually tried closing and reopening the page to see if the status changed. One (1) user mentioned closing her browser to see if the plugin would finish installing and register the green check mark.

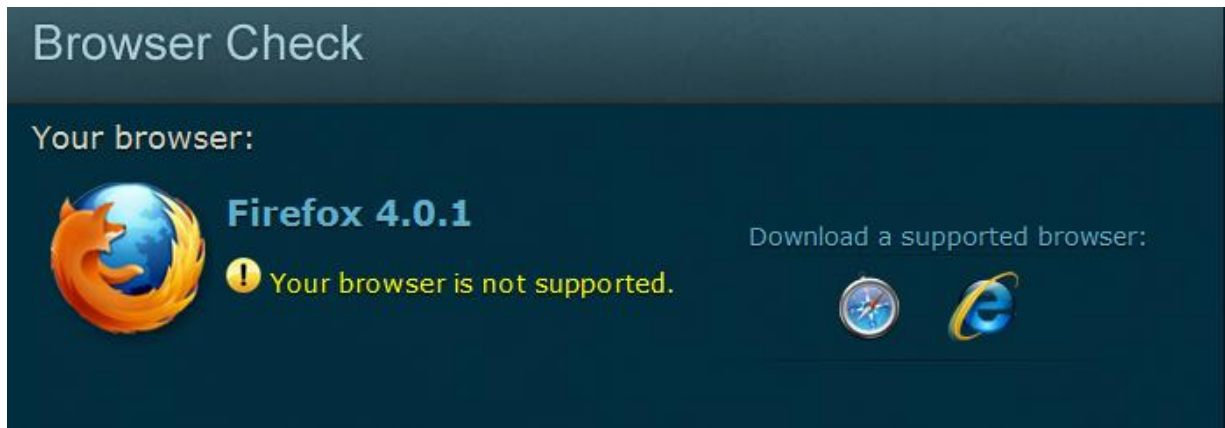
Also, due to the number of windows open at times, even in video review it was difficult to tell if some users had closed the current check window before re-running the tune up.

Recommendations:

- Consider including a form of browser “on focus” trigger that auto-refreshes the page when a user return to the browser
- If an auto-refresh is not possible, include a “Refresh” button on the page to allow the user to manually initiate a recheck.

BROWSER CHECK PAGE - FIREFOX

Severity: Medium

**Figure 3: Firefox header**

80% (4 of 5) of Firefox users noticed the “Your browser is not supported” message right away; however at least one was not sure if that meant overall or because of missing plug-ins.

Some Firefox users hesitated at the line “Download a supported browser:” above the IE and Safari icons since they already had at least one of them installed depending on the PC operating system

40% (2 of 5) of Firefox users thought they would try using Firefox and only switch browsers if they run into trouble viewing content

100% (3 of 3) of Apple users preferred the Firefox browser over Safari, seeing Safari as slow. Of them, one user was surprised that in this era Firefox was not supported.

Recommendations:

- Make the instruction more clear. Ask users to switch to a supported browser first if they already have it on their computers; otherwise, give them the download links/icons.

WIMBA VOICE CHECK

Severity: Medium

Users were confused when the Wimba Voice setup button didn’t change to a green check after refreshing the window.

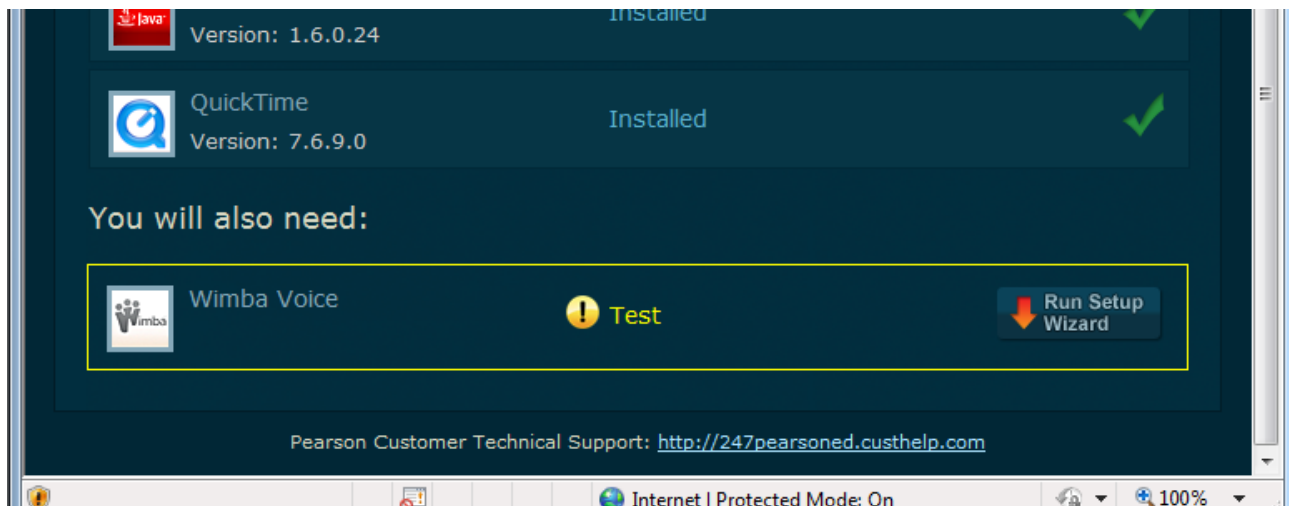


Figure 4: Wimba voice option

Three (3) users tried clicking on "Test" in the Wimba Voice row thinking it would try and test the voice program. Also, three (3) of the first four (4) users started to run the Wimba install a second time – perhaps due to no green check mark. After the fourth person we stopped using the Wimba option.

Recommendations:

- Remove Wimba Voice from the Browser Check window and note it as required software in another location
- If not removed from the page, use different heading labels to more specifically call out the fact it is a separate software install and not a plug-in
- Remove the yellow circle and exclamation point; change "Test" to "Run Setup Wizard" to activate Wimba Voice feature

BROWSER CHECK PAGE - TERMINOLOGY

Severity: Low

Most users are fine with the button label "Download" as it is still a call-to-action and close enough to resulting sequence. One user did suggest "Get" as a better label since the button does not start a download, but rather opens a page.

Also, while users generally understood the term "null", they thought it was a bit technical and suggested using "None", "N/A", or leaving it blank since the plug-in was not installed.

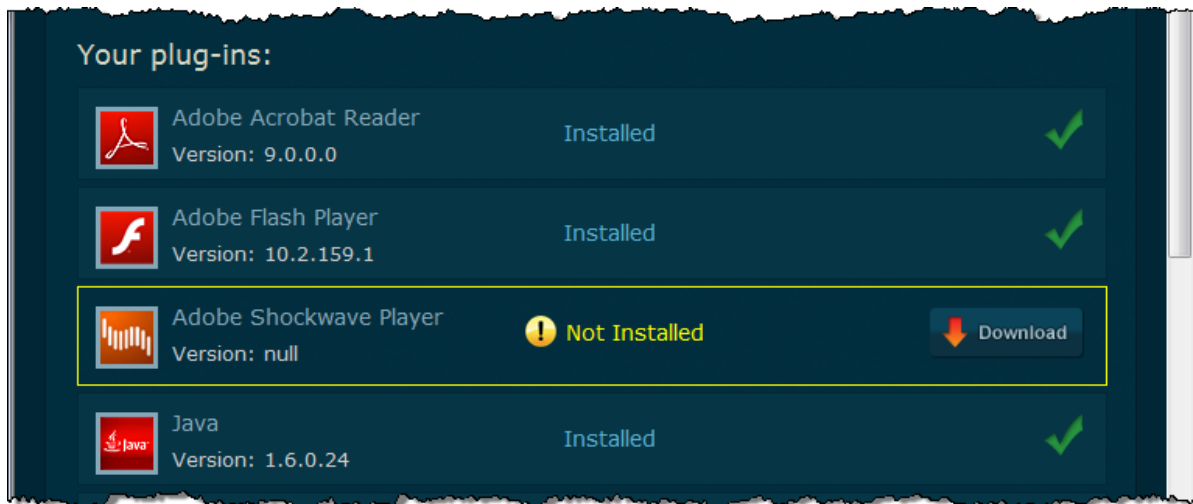


Figure 5: Browser check plug-ins

Lastly, users had no issue defining what a browser, or a plug-in, is in general.

Recommendations:

- Do not display "Null" as a version number, use "None" or simply leave it blank
- Clearly state what is required and what is optional

BROWSER CHECK PAGE - IE/SAFARI SETTINGS

Severity: Low

Users had no problem noticing the yellow circle and exclamation point in either the upper right settings list or the main body. They also understood the upper right three options were browser settings rather than plug-ins and seemed to like the separation in the page layout.

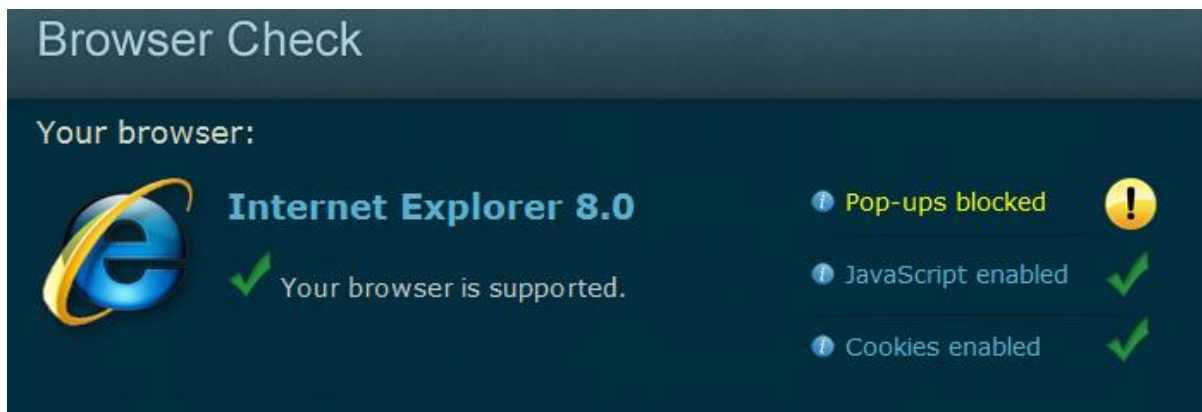


Figure 6: IE header and settings area

Lastly, users did not appear to have much too trouble turning off the pop-up blocker, though the help text could be more precise. It is even easier for IE9 users as they are given a new notification window which offers the option to turn off the pop-up blocker without going to tools.

Recommendations:

- Make the yellow icon clickable and open to the same location as the hyperlink

BROWSER CHECK PAGE – SUPPORT LINK

Severity: Low

When asked what they would do if they were confused or having trouble:

- 62.5% (5 of 8) noted the support link in the footer and would click it.
- 37.5% (3 of 8) said they would try to figure it out themselves or seek a friend.
- One student missed the link due to size and placement, thinking it was generic footer information. He looked for a “Help” or “Support” option near the top of the page.
- One instructor returned to the home page and pointed to the “Help and Support” link in the header.

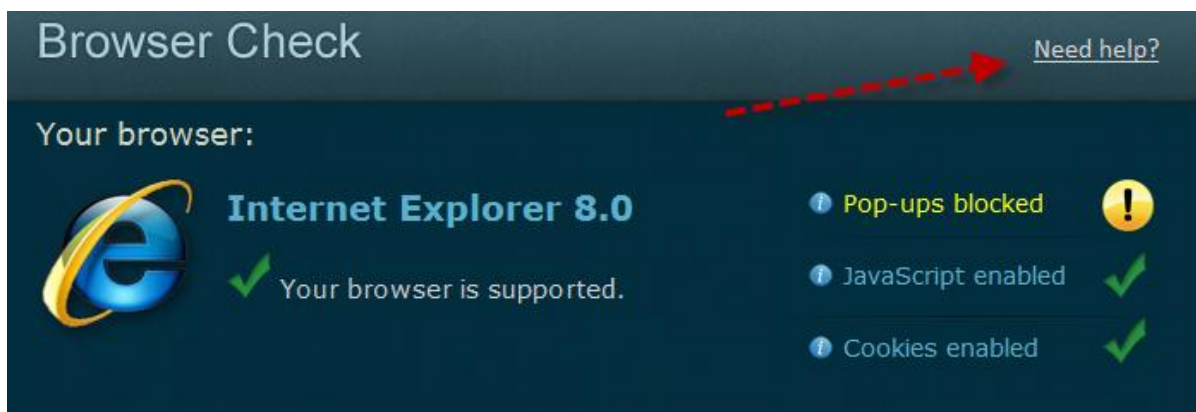


Figure 7: IE settings and help links

Recommendations:

- For better visibility, consider placing a short “help” link at the top of the page, i.e., “Questions?”, “Need help?”, or “Technical support”. It could point to the same tech support page as the hyperlink on the bottom of the page.
- Remove the tech support link from the footer or use a shorter text phrase. A long list of plug-ins will increase the length of the page and the chance the link is overlooked at the bottom of the page.
- Increase the size of the font in the footer if the support link remains.

PLUG-IN INSTALLATION

Severity: N/A

When asked whether they thought a plug-in installation would be for a specific browser or would install in all browsers:

- 5 of 8 expected the install to be for ALL browser
- 2 of 8 expected the install to be for that SPECIFIC browser
- 1 of 8 thought it depended on the plug-in

Recommendations:

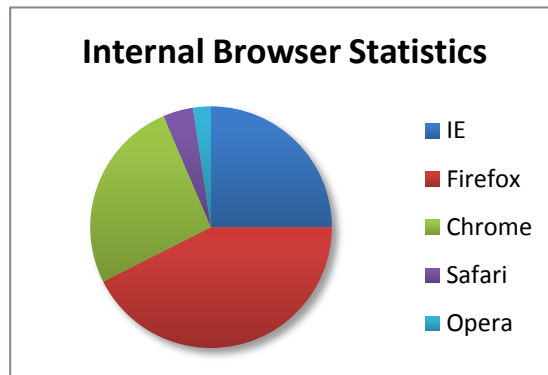
- None

BROWSER WARS – INTERNET EXPLORER/SAFARI VS. FIREFOX/CHROME

Severity: N/A

Several of the users were surprised to find out that Firefox nor Chrome was supported through the browser check. Recent research shows a significant shift away from IE since the MyLab creation.

- Internally, out of the last 136 academic users who participated in Pearson usability studies:
 - 43.4% prefer IE
 - 23.5% prefer Firefox
 - 22.1% prefer Chrome
 - 11.0% prefer Safari
 - 0% prefer Opera



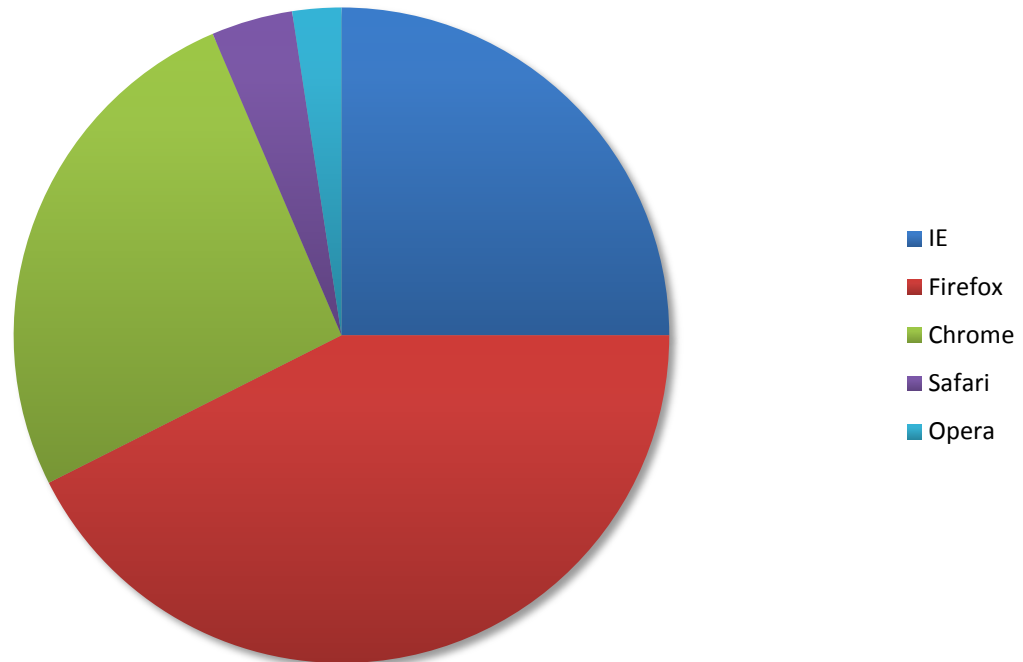
- More alarmingly, according to W3C, the top two browsers being used today are Firefox at 42.4% and Google Chrome at 25.9%.

Browser Statistics Month by Month

2011	<u>Internet Explorer</u>	<u>Firefox</u>	<u>Chrome</u>	<u>Safari</u>	<u>Opera</u>
May	24.9 %	42.4 %	25.9 %	4.0 %	2.4 %
April	24.3 %	42.9 %	25.6 %	4.1 %	2.6 %
March	25.8 %	42.2 %	25.0 %	4.0 %	2.5 %
February	26.5 %	42.4 %	24.1 %	4.1 %	2.5 %
January	26.6 %	42.8 %	23.8 %	4.0 %	2.5 %

Image Courtesy of w3schools.com
http://www.w3schools.com/browsers/browsers_stats.asp

W3C Browsers Statistics For The Month of May



Recommendations:

- Less than 50% of users use Safari and Internet Explorer. The system should support the majority of the browsers in use.

Appendices

APPENDIX A, TEST PLAN

A copy of the test plan can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-G4ofVo9RPtwEVO7wdT-rVa63x8xuWvCUTvpD7nuL4E/edit?hl=en_US&authkey=CIrOtis

APPENDIX B, PARTICIPANT WAIVER

Please read the following:

I have freely volunteered to participate in this product evaluation/usability study.

I have been informed in advance what my task(s) will be and what procedures will be followed.

I understand that the task(s) are designed to evaluate the ease of use of our product and are NOT designed to measure my performance.

I understand that the computer screen and phone conversation will be recorded during this session for further study if needed. Names will not be associated or reported with data or findings from this evaluation.

I am aware that I have the right to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation at any time.

I will not disclose the testing content to others.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had my questions answered to my satisfaction.

My acceptance below may be taken as my affirmation of all the above statements; it was given prior to my participation in this study.

If you agree with all of the statements listed above, select the "Yes" radio button and go to next page.

Yes

No

APPENDIX C, PROFILE SURVEY

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VRQNTLB>