

This is a good Tutorial by Scott Haneda, and posted on the osxhelp web site, © 2008 Used by Permission, The OS X help site also has many useful Mac Tutorials.

Customizing Safari Preferences

Since the beginning of the web, sites have been created with two major themes. First and foremost was the propagation of information. In the beginning, the web was largely text only, with perhaps a few sparse images for context.

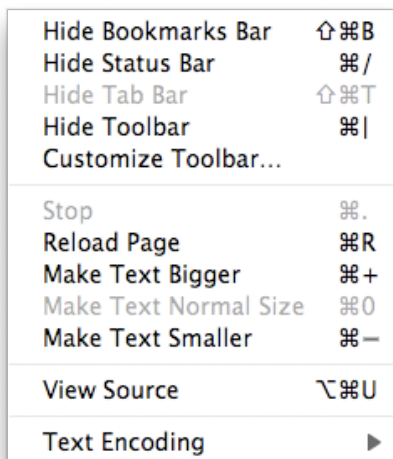
Today's web browsing experience is as much driven by beauty and design as it is by putting out information. People have been [pushing the limits of design](#) in a web browser since the old days of modem connections and slow internet speeds.

While a browser is rather flexible in what can be displayed; all browsers do have various nuances in how they display a site. A well designed website should look near identical in every browser you view it in, whether it be Safari, FireFox, or Internet Explorer. The great news is Safari and FireFox both do a great job at trying to follow standards and give you a high quality viewing experience.

Today's tutorial will cover one of Safari's preferences that gives you a small amount of control to over-ride how a site is displayed. In general, these Appearance preferences should be reserved for those with eyesight disabilities. However, many people will at times find a site has type that is too small to read; Safari has you covered, and provides simple tools to make your reading a little more pleasurable.

Enlarging and shrinking fonts

While in Safari, navigate to the view menu, you will see three items, "Make Text Bigger", "Make Text Normal Size", and "Make Text Smaller".



Selecting the larger or smaller option will do as you would suspect. If a website is difficult for you to read, select the "Make Text Larger" option, and it will bump up the font size. If the type is too large, and you would like to be able to read more of a site in one glance, you of course can make the type smaller. Finally, the "Make Text Normal Size" will bring everything back to how the website designer intended you to view the site.

While these options can make a site easier for you to read, it is important to know the layout, or the design of the site may suffer. Not all sites can gracefully shift their layout to accommodate the extra, or lack of space that a font size change may cause. As long as you are aware that you inspired the change, and an ill placed image is the cause of your

font size adjustments, you should be fine. Also remember, it is very simple to change the site back to its original format by selecting "Make Text Normal Size".

Changing fonts with the keyboard for efficiency

Many people will use these settings often, making them a [perfect case for keyboard shortcuts](#). To make text larger, just press the command-plus keyboard combination, smaller is command-minus, and to bring it all back to normal, command-zero.

The Appearance preferences

Selecting the Safari menu, and down to Preferences, will bring up a palette that has numerous options. Over time we will cover them all, for now, I would like to concentrate on the Appearance portion.



Safari's standard font

The first option of the Appearance preferences is setting of the "Standard Font". By default, it is set to Times 16. You are free to change this to anything you like. In most cases, you will be best served to leave this setting as it is.

"Times" refers to the name of the font, and "16" refers to the size. This should not be confused with the font being 16 times larger.

When a developer makes a website, it is designed around a browser's default settings. Safari's default of Times 16 is taken into consideration when the developer is building the site.

If you make this larger or small, all websites will be shown either larger or smaller in regards to the fonts. This can wreak havoc on sites that have strict design structures. At times, it can even make a site more difficult to navigate, as the larger fonts can push graphics elements off the page.

If you are burdened with a vision impairment of some form, I would go against my recommendation of leaving the setting as is. People with vision disabilities should do whatever it takes to make their internet experiences as comfortable as possible.

Safari's fixed width font

In the same area is a setting to control Safari's fixed width font settings. This has the same effect on fonts as the standard font setting with one exception. It only affects a certain type of font. A fixed width font is one in which the width of every character is identical to that of another character. For example, a skinny letter "i" will take up the same width as a fat letter "m". I am again recommending this setting be left alone, unless you have a specific need to change it.

Display images when page opens

In the past, people have written in and asked how they can speed up their browser when they are on a slow internet connection. This setting is one such way. Un-checking the "Display images when page opens" will disable all images from loading.

In general, a page will load much faster with this setting off. If a site only has superfluous images, and they are of no use to understanding the content, you can turn this setting off.

The trouble with this setting is it is indeed valuable, but the difficulty in accessing it makes it near worthless to use. There are many sites I would not mind reading without images. The downside is it takes longer to visit the setting and locate it in the preferences than it does for me to sit patiently and wait for the website to load. Worse, when I want to turn it back on again, I have to repeat the same steps. Time wasted if you ask me.

Safari character encoding

The last preference in regards to Safari's appearance has to do with character encoding. If you read English text, this should be left alone, and set to "Western (ISO Latin 1)". If you read in a foreign language, set the character encoding to what is most logical.

Keep in mind; this is a default character encoding. Websites can and do over-ride this setting and force the encoding they feel is most appropriate for the language the site is written in.

The Safari Appearance preferences are pretty mundane and simple. In most cases you should leave them as they are. I wanted to point them out as there are people with disabilities, and it is important they are not treated like second-class citizens. Everyone gets old, everyone's eyes wear out to some degree, and the Appearance settings may help you tolerate this inevitable problem.

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