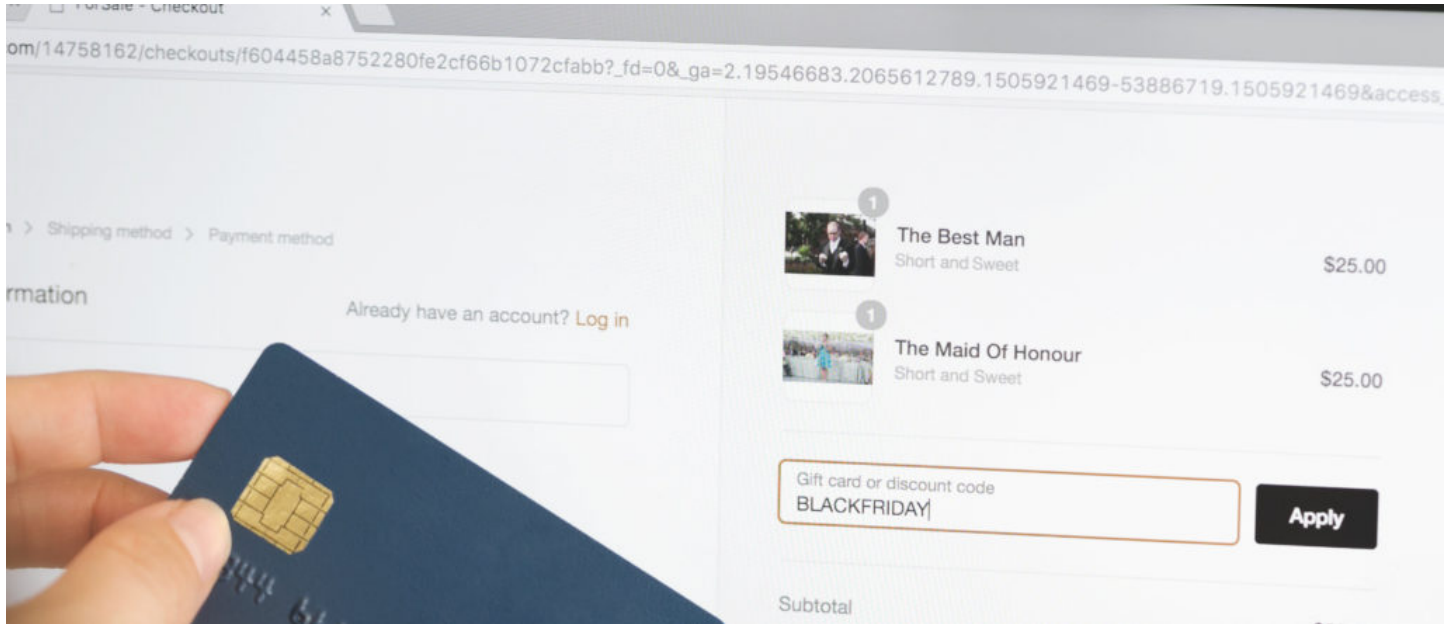


Potential Problems Ahead For Users of Three Popular Web Browsers

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By Kurt Jefferson, Editor, Central Kentucky Computer Society



Three of the most popular Web browsers in use today are about to hit version 100. That is a major milestone for Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, and Microsoft Edge. While the makers of these browsers might normally be celebrating, they aren't putting candles on the cake just yet. That's because there's a potential problem here.

It turns out that some websites are not designed to display their pages correctly when viewed by versions of web browsers containing three digits – such as 100. You might say outdated code is the culprit. (No one knows for sure how many websites are using this outdated code, which could cause visitors headaches.)

It sort of reminds us of the year 2000, when many tech folks feared computers would revert to the year 1900. (Many computers read 1999 as 99, and it was feared the year 2000 – with four digits – would create computers to flip over to 1900. Headaches persisted for everyone from water treatment plant managers to toll booth operators as they waited for January 1, 2000. It turned out many operating systems either issued a patch or handled the date change successfully.)

Back to the year 2022, and we have the so-called version 100 issue. When you visit a website, most check your browser version number for security reasons. If you use an outdated, unsupported browser, you won't be able to visit the website for fear hackers might have compromised it. Outdated code on some websites will read version 100 of Google Chrome, such as version "10," and block the website from displaying on your screen.

News reports indicate that Firefox, Chrome, and Edge makers are scrambling to deal with this. If many websites fail to display correctly, Mozilla will freeze its Firefox browser at version 99 and urge websites to fix their code. Google says it plans to freeze Chrome at version 99. Microsoft has not commented on how it

will handle the issue.

If you visit websites using Firefox 100, Chrome 100, or Edge 100 and they refuse to display correctly, try using another browser. (Everyone should have at least two different browsers loaded on their computers and mobile devices – just in case the default browser stops working correctly.) If you use Macs, an iPad, or an iPhone, switch temporarily to Apple’s default browser, Safari. (As I write this, Safari is at version 15.3, so you shouldn’t have a problem.) You can easily export your bookmarks from your current browser into Safari. If you don’t like Safari, try Brave. Tech experts say it’s a very secure and private web browser that doesn’t share your searches or other information.

Another option is the Epic Privacy Browser. Epic Privacy Browser was founded by a company based in Washington D.C. and Bangalore, India. It’s based on the Chromium source code, which means it works and feels just like Google Chrome if you’re a big Chrome fan. (I avoid Chrome, but I’m testing Epic on a Mac, and I like what I see so far.) It’s a solid browser.

Wikipedia says this about Epic: “Epic’s default configuration takes a proactive approach to ensuring that session data (such as cookies, history, and cache) are removed upon exit. The browser includes a proxy service that the user can enable and automatically enables when using a search engine. Other features, such as preferring SSL connections and always sending a Do Not Track header, further advance privacy.” It adds, “Ad and user activity trackers are blocked by default by the Epic browser, which prevents users being tracked.” If you use a Windows 10 PC, try downloading the Brave browser (which uses the same engine as Chrome and Edge). Another choice is the Epic Privacy Browser. Both are excellent options for Windows 10.

And there are other choices. Begin using the DuckDuckGo browser for Mac and Windows when it is released.

Experts say, hands down, Brave is much more secure and private than Chrome. So is Epic Privacy Browser. wikipedia.org notes, “Epic developers removed all Google tracking code and binaries from the chromium source code to compile a clean executable and blocks other companies from tracking users.” Unlike Chrome, Epic’s number one goal is security and privacy.

News reports indicate Google intends to release version 100 of Chrome in early April. Mozilla plans to issue Firefox 100 in May. As of late February, here are some websites that do not display correctly using one of the beta issues of Chrome, Edge, and Firefox version 100. Problematic websites include Yahoo!, T-Mobile, Bethesda.net, The Mirror newspaper in Britain, Vivacom.bg, and others.

As the saying goes – this, too, shall pass. Once websites fix their ancient code, this problem will disappear. Until then, it might be wise to begin using Safari, Epic Private Browser, or Brave to get used to the new software.