

## Creating Firefox extensions

This is a tutorial specified for BugMeNot. I also have an updated ["Hello, World!" tutorial](#).

### Contents

1. [Learn By Example](#)
2. [Dissecting the Bug](#)
3. [Re-configuring your extension's installation](#)
4. [Chrome is more than a shiny bumper](#)
5. [Skin that cat](#)
6. [Pack it up and try it out](#)
7. [An easier way to re-build](#)
8. [My Firefox got completely hosed up](#)
9. [Ensure server compatibility](#)
10. [Additional help and information](#)

### Learn by example

Everyone has a good idea at one time or another to implement a new feature in a web browser. Well, with the goodness that is Mozilla Firefox, now you can do just that. You need to have a vague understanding of XUL and Javascript, but you certainly don't need to be a master of either. When I started, I knew nothing about either one, really. I had seen some bookmarklets here and there, and tried to figure out just how they worked. Well, that's how I made my first extension, BugMeNot.

I found [bugmenot.com](#) by chance one day, and it certainly made browsing web sites that required registration much easier. They even had a bookmarklet that would work "on the fly", more or less. I liked using it, but I'd prefer to have it within easier reach, say, a right click menu that I could tap at any time. Unfortunately, I had no idea how to do this, so I scoured ways of adding items to a right-click menu.

Xul Planet had a nice little [tutorial](#) which showed me the basics of creating a menu. The problem was that I wasn't making a new window, I wanted to add an item to a pre-existing menu. This gave me a good grounding in how XUL works, though. Mozilla also has a very handy [DOM Window Interface reference](#).

So basically I needed to figure out exactly how extensions are packaged up, and how they work. Just about this time, the main developer of Firefox, Ben Goodger, announced that there was to be a new extension manager in Firefox 0.9, which would entail the use of a different packaging system. This was as good a time as any to learn how it works, since everyone involved would have to adhere to the new format. So, Ben wrote a [guide to packaging extensions](#) which would work for the new browser builds.

[Back to top](#)

### Dissecting the Bug

Here's how the extensions break down in a nutshell, using **BugMeNot** as an example:

(You can [download it here](#), just right-click and save, then you can follow along.)

**bugmenot.xpi** is the packaged extension. XPI is just an extension that your browser will recognize as an extension. In reality, it's just a zipped up file. So you can rename the XPI to ZIP or even JAR if you want, then open it up using an archive program, like [7-Zip](#) or [WinRAR](#). So, once that's opened up, you'll see:

- **chrome**
- **default**