



# FIREFOX ADD-ONS: **MADE EASY**

*Use your Web skills to create powerful, restartless add-ons for Firefox the easy way – with Add-on Builder (Beta) and the Add-on SDK.*

Add-ons empower millions of Firefox users to enhance and personalize their browsing experience. If you know how to develop in HTML, JavaScript and CSS, why not show off your Web smarts by creating an add-on of your own? With Add-on Builder and the Add-on SDK, we've developed a wide range of tools to get you going, from building right through to publishing your add-on and sharing it with the world.

## *Your Choice of Build Environment...*



### **Add-on builder (beta)**

Add-on Builder is a Web-based development environment that provides additional functionality for working with the Add-on SDK.

- » Edit code in a feature-rich environment
- » Test your add-ons instantly
- » Use built-in version control & sharing



### **Add-on SDK**

The Add-on SDK is set of APIs bundled with a command line utility that allows you to develop add-ons with your own tool chain.

- » Choose your own code editor
- » Access your development files locally
- » Get greater control over SDK build steps

## *There's Nothing To It*

To make add-ons, you don't need to know your way around C++, XUL or the like. You just need some basic Web development skills in Javascript, HTML and CSS — that's it! And with Builder, you don't even need to set up a build environment. Just log in and start developing. All the hard parts are done for you.

## *Great Developer Features*

All add-ons built with the Add-on SDK or with Builder are restartless by default. That means that users can install your add-on without needing to stop what they're doing in Firefox. Mozilla has also worked really hard to make sure that key aspects of add-on functionality are available through a library of easy-to-implement APIs. If the API you need isn't available, you can also have access to custom built APIs with other developers, too.

*For more information visit:*  
<http://addons.mozilla.org/builder>



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## *Product FAQs*

### *What is Add-on Builder?*

Add-on Builder is an online development environment that you can use with just a Web browser. It provides a code editor, a file browser and tools to help test and package your add-on right in the browser.

### *What is the Add-on SDK?*

The Add-on SDK is a downloadable software development kit for building Firefox add-ons in a command line interface environment. It includes high-level APIs for interacting with and modifying Web pages and Firefox's user interface along with tools for creating, testing and packaging add-ons.

### *What is the Jetpack SDK?*

Jetpack SDK is the old name for the Add-on SDK. The Jetpack team shipped nine alpha versions of the Jetpack SDK in 2010 (versions 0.1 through 0.9) before renaming the product to Add-on SDK in conjunction with the release of the 1.0.1b1 version.

### *What are the benefits of using the Add-on SDK?*

The Add-on SDK lets you build Firefox Add-ons using common Web technologies like HTML, JavaScript and CSS. It also includes tools that make it easy to create, test and package add-ons. The SDK is designed to produce add-ons that will be forward-compatible with future versions of Firefox, so you won't need to update your add-on every time a new version of Firefox is released. SDK-based add-ons benefit from a security model that limits the harm that can be caused by a vulnerability in add-on code. Finally, the SDK implements the CommonJS Packages and Modules specifications to enable a rich ecosystem of third-party APIs that developers can use to build their add-ons in addition to the APIs built into the SDK itself. We maintain a page listing some of the extra third-party APIs you can use in your add-on.

### *What are the benefits to users of SDK-based add-ons?*

Add-ons created with Builder or the Add-on SDK are restartless by default, meaning users can install and remove SDK-based add-ons instantly, without a browser restart. This makes it easier for them to try add-ons and personalize their browsing experience. Developers and users alike will also not have to worry about add-on compatibility with new versions of Firefox. Finally, SDK-based add-ons will soon load in separate processes, so slow-running add-ons won't slow down Firefox itself.

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## *Can I do everything with the Add-on SDK that I could with a XUL-based add-on? Should I rewrite my XUL-based add-on now?*

You can do essentially everything with an SDK-based add-on that you can do with a XUL-based add-on, including: modifying XUL windows, accessing XPCOM components and loading your own XPCOM components — both binary and JavaScript. You have to do some things differently, in particular: You can't use XUL overlays in SDK-based add-ons because they are not compatible with restartless add-ons. Instead, you have to use DOM manipulation. In the 1.0 release, however, the SDK is aimed primarily at Web developers who wish to write add-ons but are unfamiliar with the traditional XUL-based approach. So it supports a set of easy-to-use high level JavaScript APIs that address the most common use cases encountered by add-on developers. Using only the high level APIs, you can't do everything a XUL-based add-on can do. After shipping 1.0 one of our top priorities is to help developers migrate from XUL-based add-ons to SDK-based add-ons, so implementing advanced add-ons with the SDK will get much easier. So if you're a XUL add-on developer, an early adopter and are willing to participate in the development process, now is a great time to try out the SDK and help us figure out the right set of features to enable you to make the transition.

## *What do I need to know to write an add-on using the SDK?*

You'll develop add-ons using JavaScript, and you'll interact with Web content via the DOM. You'll use HTML and CSS to structure and style your own user interface components.

## *What are the system requirements for the SDK?*

You need Python 2.5, 2.6, or 2.7 and Firefox version 4 or later. If you're running Windows, MozillaBuild, while not mandatory, will install the correct version of Python and the MSYS package, which will make it easier to work with the SDK.

## *Do users need to download or install anything to use SDK-based add-ons?*

No. Users only need to install the SDK-based add-ons themselves, which are all hosted in the same place as traditional XUL-based add-ons: [addons.mozilla.org](http://addons.mozilla.org).

## *Will Mozilla stop supporting XUL-based add-ons?*

Mozilla has no plans to stop supporting XUL-based add-ons, and it would be premature to start making such plans, as the vast majority of Firefox add-ons are XUL-based. If at some point in the future that ratio changes, and the vast majority of Firefox add-ons become SDK-based, then it may make sense to consider deprecating XUL-based add-ons.



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## *What about Firefox Mobile?*

The Jetpack team's current focus is creating the best possible experience for developers of Firefox add-ons for desktop. We are well aware, however, of the importance of Firefox for mobile to Mozilla and its users and we plan to prioritize Firefox add-on development for mobile in a future release of the SDK.

## *I have a Google Chrome plugin/Safari add-on. Will it work as a Firefox add-on?*

You will need to do some porting, but the changes should be relatively straightforward. David Morgan has written an extension for Chrome and Firefox that shares much of the code: <http://code.google.com/p/scry/>.