

Firefox Extension Development Tutorial :: Environment

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1. Environment Overview

It will be beneficial to setup your computer for the development process before you dive in. This section will help you do just that. Fortunately for developers and users alike, extensions written for Firefox are platform independent. This means that you may code your extension on whichever operating system you are most comfortable with (Windows, Mac OS X, Linux).

2. Getting Firefox 1.5

The Mozilla Foundation has made many improvements to the extension framework used by Firefox. These changes have been incorporated into the next major release, version 1.5. As of early November 2005, this version is in the Release Candidate stage. The official version should be released within the next several months.

This website describes how to develop extensions for Firefox 1.5, and thus you will need to upgrade your browser. During the install process, select the 'Custom' Setup type and ensure that the 'Developer Tools' components are being installed. Please [click here to download Firefox 1.5 RC1](#).

3. Zip Utility

You will soon learn that a Firefox Extension is nothing more than a file hierarchy that has been compressed into a zip file. In order to package your extension, you will need to be able to zip up files on your computer.

- *Mac OS X*: If you installed the Developer Tools when installing this operating system you already have the zip utility installed. Open up your Terminal and type zip. If you receive a 'File Not Found' error, you may download an install package for the zip utilities from [here](#).
- *Windows*: If you are running Windows XP you should be able to right click on a file, choose 'Send To...' and then 'Compressed (Zipped) Folder'. If you do not have this option you will need to download a compression utility. We recommend [WinZip!](#)
- *Unix*: If your Unix system does not have zip installed, please follow your distribution's documentation to determine how to install the binary (it is very common).

4. File Extensions

The Windows operating system, by default, hides the file extension of known file types (such as .doc, .zip, .ppt, etc.). At many points during extension development it will be much easier

if you are able to view and edit the full file name. Choosing not to perform this step could cause you some confusion in the future.

Forcing Windows to show the full filename is not difficult, please follow these steps:

1. Open a folder window (such as *My Computer*).
2. Select *Folder Options* from the *Tools* menu.
3. Select the *View* tab.
4. Ensure that the *Hide extensions for known file types* item is *not* checked.
5. Press the *OK* button.