



## Factsheet 6—Securing the Microsoft Internet Explorer 9 web browser

Often, security and functionality are at opposing ends of a sliding scale in web browsers. The more functionality you allow, the greater the risk of the security of your computer being compromised. This factsheet describes the settings needed to secure Internet Explorer version 9 in order to achieve a reasonable balance between security and usability. Similar settings are available in earlier versions of Internet Explorer (versions 7 and 8); however, it is recommended you upgrade to the most current version.

**Always ensure that the web browser you choose to use (such as Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome or Apple Safari) is the newest available, as the newer versions are the most secure.**

However, please note that 'beta' versions of software are 'pre-release' versions and should be avoided as these have not been fully tested under all circumstances and are more likely to affect software stability and contain security bugs.

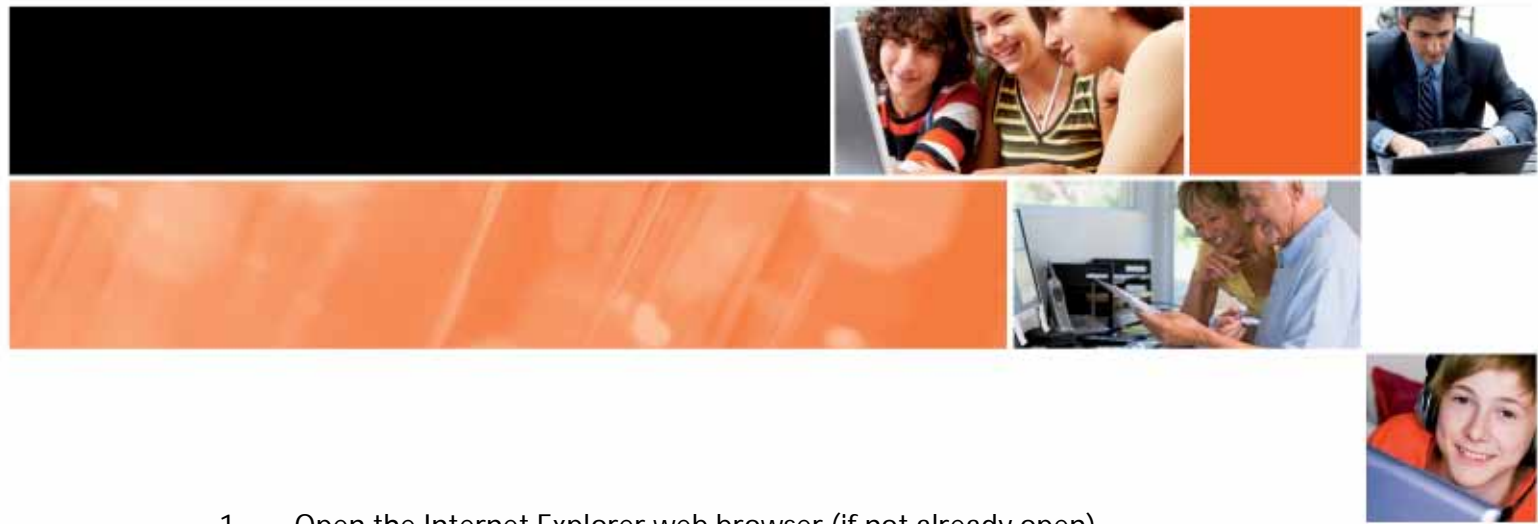
The settings described below should be enabled for each account on the computer (whether an administrator or limited user account) as the settings only take effect on the user's account from which they are set.

This means that each user has the ability to control their browser's security settings. However, if one user downgrades their web browser's security settings, it could compromise the security of the entire computer.

We recommend using the default Internet Explorer browser security settings as they provide a reasonable level of security without significantly impacting usability and functionality.

We do not recommend downgrading the security below the default recommended levels.

The quickest way to ensure you have the default settings is to follow these steps.



1. Open the Internet Explorer web browser (if not already open).



Figure 1: Internet Explorer icon

2. From the **Tools** menu, select **Internet Options**.
3. From the **Internet Options** box, select the **Security** tab.
4. Click on the **Reset all zones to default level**, as shown in the diagram below.

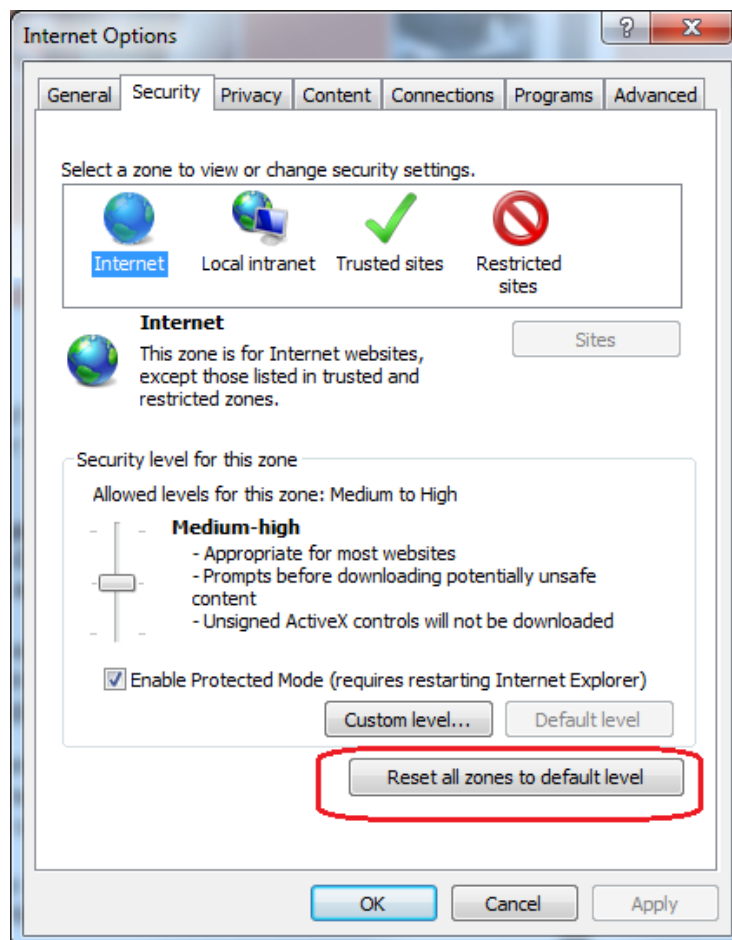
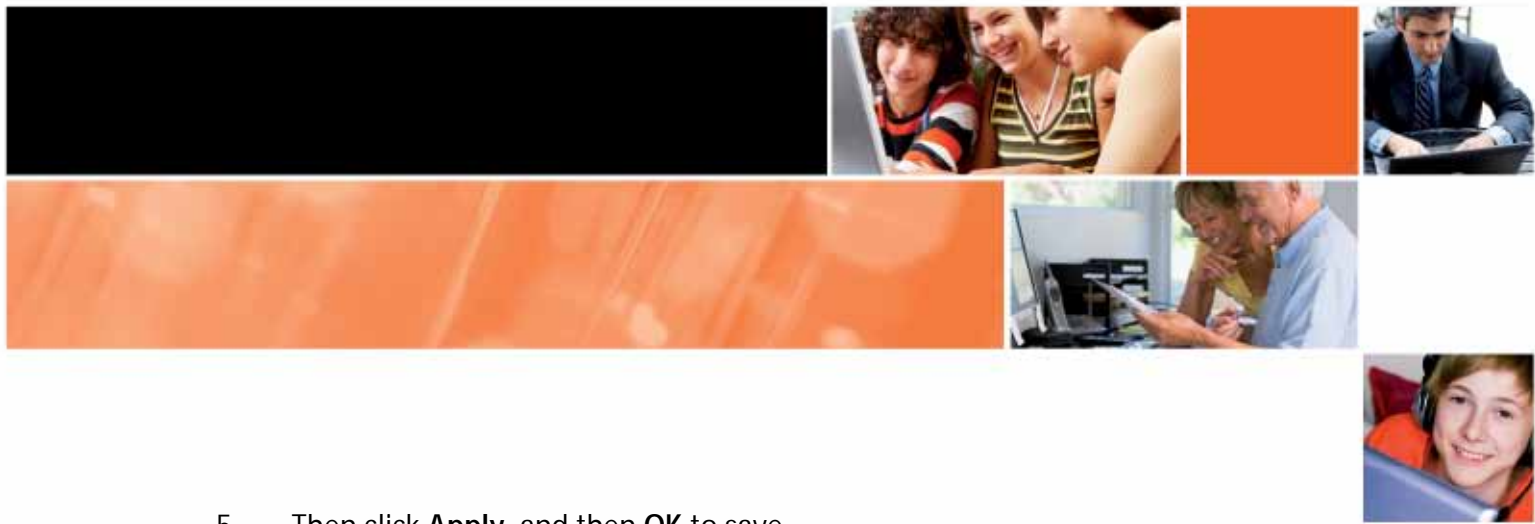


Figure 2: Internet Options window in Internet Explorer



5. Then click **Apply**, and then **OK** to save.

In summary, the default settings provide the following levels of security for each of the following zones.

Zone	Default security level
<b>Internet</b> This zone is for internet websites, except those listed in the trusted and restricted zones.	Medium-High
<b>Local intranet</b> This zone is for internal websites managed by your business or workplace.	Medium-Low
<b>Trusted sites</b> This zone is for websites on the internet in which you have a high level of trust and confidence.	Medium
<b>Restricted sites</b> This zone is for websites on the internet that you do not trust and suspect could be malicious.	High

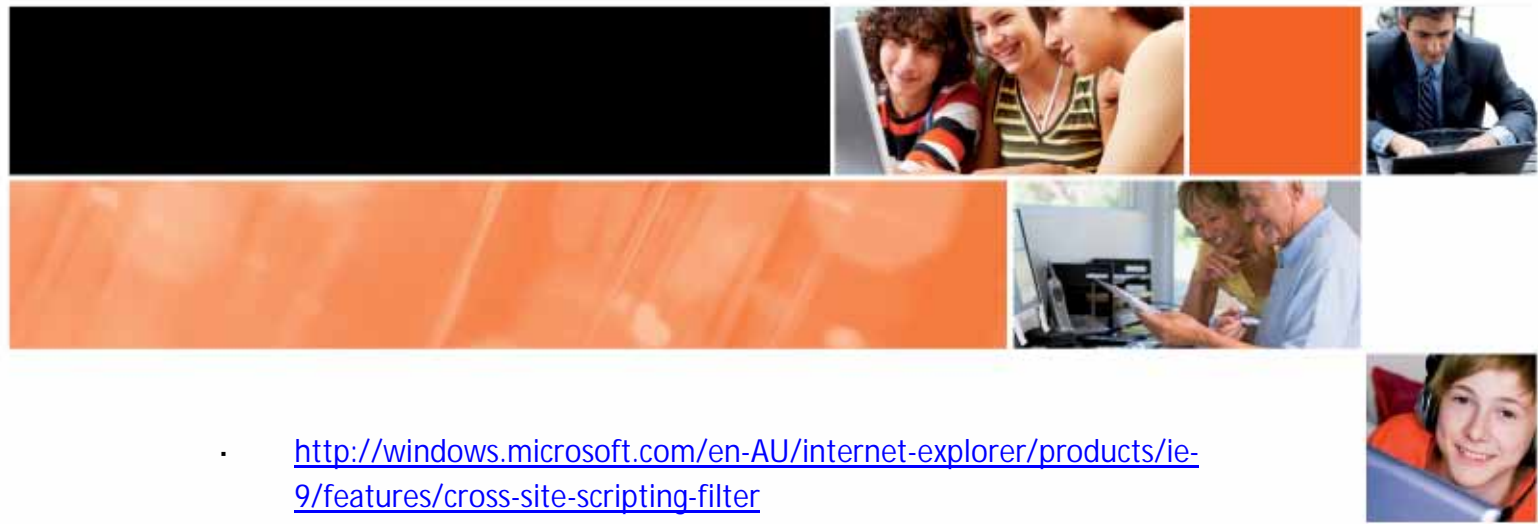
In the **Internet Options** window, click on each zone—internet, Local intranet, Trusted sites and Restricted sites—to see and modify the security settings further.

It is possible to increase the level of security of the browser by changing all zones to high but it is likely you will reduce the functionality of popular websites (particularly in the internet zone) that require you to log in (such as online banking, webmail, or social networking sites).

If you choose to modify the settings further, at the very least, ensure that the **Enabled Protected Mode** box is ticked, as shown in the diagram above.

For further information about Internet Explorer 9 security settings see the following references.

- <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-AU/windows7/Security-and-privacy-features-in-Internet-Explorer-9>
- <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-AU/internet-explorer/products/ie-9/features/activex-filtering>



- <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-AU/internet-explorer/products/ie-9/features/cross-site-scripting-filter>
- <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-AU/internet-explorer/products/ie-9/features/domain-highlighting>
- <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-AU/internet-explorer/products/ie-9/features/download-manager>
- <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-AU/internet-explorer/products/ie-9/features/in-private>
- <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-AU/internet-explorer/products/ie-9/features/smartscreen-filter>