

Chrome to start blocking annoying notification requests

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- Chrome's current, very annoying notification pop-up.
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- With the new UI, notifications are blocked by default.
- The desktop (top) and mobile (bottom) settings.

In a blog post yesterday, Google outlined plans for a less intrusive permission UI for Chrome's notification feature. Chrome's current permission UI spawns a pop-up box near the address bar, which covers Web content and is one of the many annoying pop-ups that can spawn when a website loads, alongside "subscribe to our site/newsletter" and "this site uses cookies."

Google's post says that, while notifications are "an essential capability for a wide range of applications," Chrome's permission pop-up is also "a common complaint" among users that "interrupt[s] the user's workflow and result[s] in a bad user experience." To address these complaints, Chrome 80 will introduce a quieter notification UI. Interestingly, Mozilla announced basically the same changes to Firefox recently.

The quieter UI will block notifications by default, rather

than spawn a pop-up asking if users want to allow notifications or not. On the desktop, a message appears in the address bar saying “Notifications blocked,” and clicking on the adjacent bell icon will allow the user to enable notifications. On mobile, there is still a pop-up, but it is less intrusive than before, being reduced to a single bar instead of a full-screen pop-up.

For users of Chrome 80, there are a few ways to get this quieter UI. First, users can opt-in to the UI on all websites by pasting `chrome://settings/content/notifications` into the address bar and checking the “use quieter messaging” box. For users who don’t manually opt in, Google says “Users who repeatedly deny notifications across websites will be automatically enrolled in the quieter notifications UI.” Google is also going to start banishing individual sites with “very low opt-in rates” to the quieter UI automatically.

Chrome’s current notification UI was created when the notification feature was first introduced. When around zero sites supported notifications, the pop-up wasn’t a big deal. Now, when tons of sites support notifications, the pop-up can be pretty annoying. It also doesn’t line up with how people use the Web. I’d bet the average Web user will visit thousands of websites, but there’s probably only a tiny handful—or possibly zero—sites that they would want to get notifications from. Allowing every site to spam you with a permissions pop-up doesn’t make sense.

Hopefully, we’ll see this UI move to the other permissions pop-ups, too. Google admits it’s annoying when Chrome spawns a pop-up message, but the exact same UI pops up when sites request location, microphone, or camera access, too. If I could give the Chrome team any advice, it would be “don’t ever cover website content with any of your UI”—keep Chrome’s UI in the UI area where it can be ignored if desired. If you’re like me and dislike all of these permission pop-ups, Chrome actually has a handy permission manager hidden in the address-

bar lock button, so you can block everything by default and easily toggle permissions on as needed.

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