

SolutionBase: Make Firefox work with your Tablet PC

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Takeaway: The Tablet PC allows you to hand-write information into data entry fields for most applications. Unfortunately, it doesn't work properly with FireFox. Here's how you can tweak Firefox to accept handwritten data.

One of the cool things about the Tablet PC environment is that you can use its handwriting recognition feature to be able to enter data into the fields of about any application using your pen rather than a keyboard. Unfortunately, it doesn't always work properly if you use Firefox as a Web browser. Here's how you fix it.

Here's a TIP

In any application where there's a data input field, you can hold the pen over the field and a small yellow keyboard icon will appear. If you tap the field, the Tablet Input Panel or TIP appears. You can then either write the information you want to type in or bring up an on-screen keyboard you can peck the letters out on.

Firefox is one of the few applications where the TIP doesn't work properly. You can tap all you want into a field on a Firefox screen, and the TIP won't appear. The only way you can enter data into Firefox fields is to use the keyboard on your Tablet PC.

Fortunately, there's something you can do about it. The same extension technology that allows you to customize your browser to add toolbars and features can also be used to enable the TIP for Firefox.

Author's Note

In this article, I'll be enabling the TIP on Firefox 1.07 running on a Lenovo Thinkpad X41 Tablet PC under Windows XP Tablet PC Edition 2005. You should at least be running Service Pack 2 on your Windows Tablet PC. The extension I'll be showing will work with all versions up to 1.07. It's been rumored to also work with the soon-to-be released Firefox 1.5, but I haven't tested it on that version.

Obtaining the extension

The extension you'll need is call tcptip. You won't find it on Firefox's regular Extensions Web page. Instead, you need to go to Mozilla.org's tcptip Web page. Click the Installation link.

When the Installation page appears, right-click INSTALL TPC TIP and select Save Link As. If you click the link normally and try to install the XPI file, you'll get a version error. Using Save As, you'll save the tpctip.xpi file to a temporary location on your hard drive. There you'll do some modification to it.

Tweaking tpctip

Begin by renaming tpctip.xpi to tcptip.zip. Next, open the zip file either with WinZip or just with Windows Explorer. Locate the install.rdf file. Edit it with any text editor such as Notepad.

Search through the file until you find the following section:

```
<Description>
<em:id>{ec8030f7-c20a-464f-9b0e-13a3a9e97384}</em:id>
<em:minVersion>0.9</em:minVersion>
<em:maxVersion>0.10</em:maxVersion>
</Description>
```

Change the `<em:maxVersion>0.10</em:maxVersion>` line to read

```
<em:maxVersion>1.50</em:maxVersion>
```

Doing so will allow the tpctip extension to work through Firefox versions 1.50.

Save the file and copy it back into the tpctip.zip file. Rename tpctip.zip back to tpctip.xpi.

Applying the extension

Once you've updated the xpi file, you can then apply it. Open Firefox. Click File | Open File. When the Open File window appears, locate the tpctip.xpi file, select it, and click Open.

You'll then see a normal Firefox Software Installation screen appear. Click Install Now. Tpctip will install just like any other extension at this point. Restart Firefox and go to a Web site with a data entry field. The TIP should now work normally.

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