10 Essential Chrome Tips To Skyrocket Your Productivity

by Abhijeet Mukherjee

10 Essential Chrome Tips to Skyrocket Your Productivity

GuidingTech

About this book

This free ebook – 10 Essential Chrome Tips to Skyrocket Your Productivity – includes certain useful but overlooked Chrome tips that have the potential to significantly improve a Chrome user's everyday experience of using the browser for work or pleasure.

The content here is part of a larger collection of tips and tutorials from The Ultimate Chrome Productivity Guide, a more comprehensive ebook on using Chrome productively and intelligently.

Towards the end of this ebook you'll get to know more about the Ultimate Chrome Productivity Guide.

But for now, let us begin with the 10 productivity tips every Chrome user should know about.

1. Enable Click to play for plugins

Plugins add functionalities to a browser and help it show you content you wouldn't be able to view otherwise (like Flash, for instance...more on that later). By default all plugins are enabled to run automatically whenever a browser needs them. But over a period of time such plugin behavior can prove to be very inconvenient.

Say you start playing a video on YouTube or Vimeo and the entire browser suddenly freezes. Sound familiar?

To avoid this, enable a Chrome feature called **Click to play.** Click to play puts plugin control in your hands as it allows plugins to play only when you want them to. Follow the steps below:

1. Click on the *Chrome menu*.

2. Click on *Settings*.

3. Scroll down and click on the link that says *Show advanced settings*.

4. You should now see the *Content settings* button under *Privacy.* Click it.
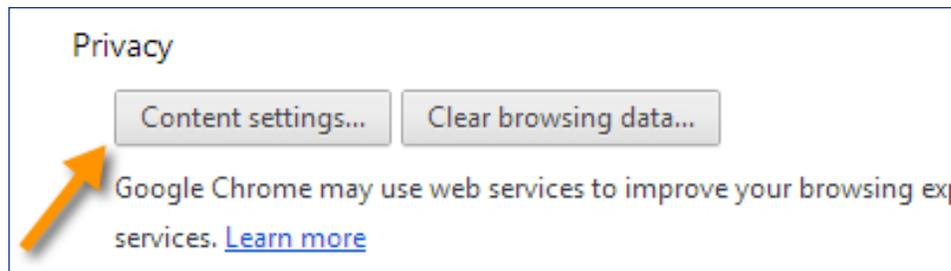
5. It'll pop up another window of options. Here, scroll down until you find the plugins section. In this section, select the **Click to play** option.
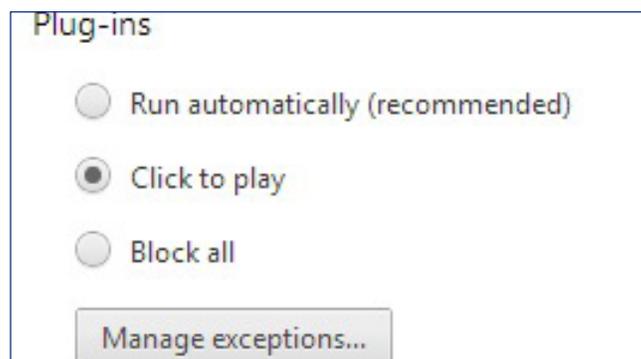
6. Click on **Done** at the bottom right of this pop-up. That's it, you're done!

To make sure this feature is working, visit a video on YouTube. It should **not** play automatically. Instead, Chrome will ask you to click to enable and play the video only after you click on it.

That means this feature also gets rid of auto-play in YouTube. Cool, huh? In my case, just this one change has significantly improved Chrome's performance on my computer. Web pages no longer seem to freeze while loading, which is a big relief.

2. Quickly jump to a particular open tab

If you keep a lot of tabs open all the time, you know about the frustration of trying to locate one particular tab in the clutter. It really irks me when I click on a tab and find it isn't the one I wanted. A way to instantly jump to a desired tab is definitely needed.

PowerSwitch is the perfect answer to the tab-searching woes of Chrome users. This is a very simple and yet extremely useful add-on that has the potential to skyrocket the productivity of heavy tab users.
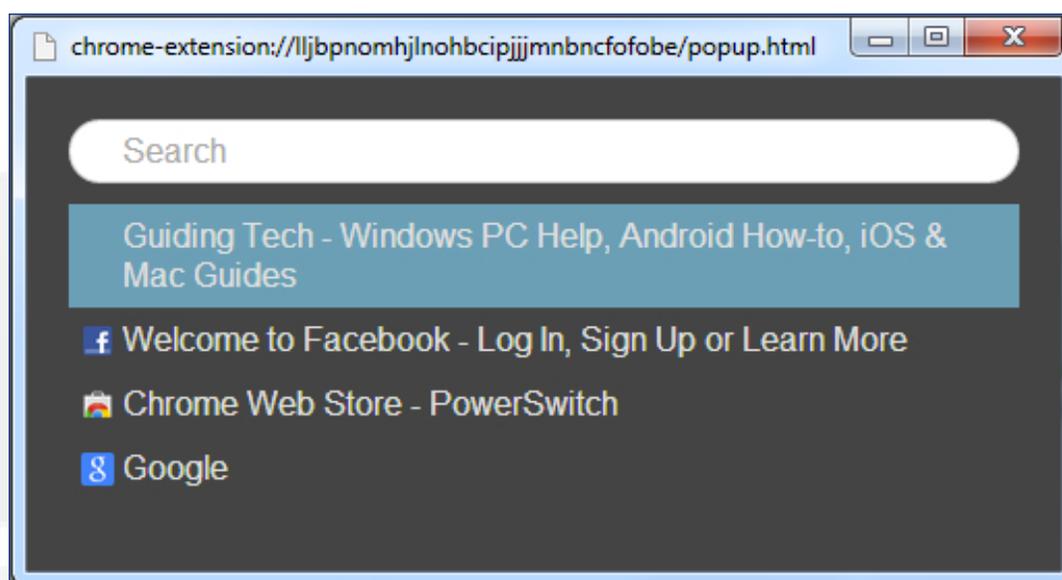
After installing PowerSwitch simply press **Ctrl + K (Windows) / Command + K (Mac)** to bring up its search window. Here you can search for a tab's name, see the results in real time and click to go to that tab.

PowerSwitch also works with open windows. If you have multiple Chrome windows open, you could use it to jump between them, too.

Overall, I'd say it cannot get simpler than this when it comes to searching for a tab on Chrome.

3. Disable Flash versions

While the first point about enabling **_Click to play_** for plugins will ensure that the Flash plugin doesn't auto-play, it is best to disable all non-native versions of Flash on Chrome.

Adobe Flash is built into Chrome so ideally you should only see one version of it. But that's usually not the case because most Chrome users also use other browsers (such as Firefox) that require a downloaded copy of Flash. This downloaded copy installs itself again on Chrome, on top of the native version.

To verify this, type **_chrome://plugins_** on Chrome's address bar and look for the heading that says _Adobe Flash Player._ When I first navigated to that page way back, I was surprised to find four Flash files there. The image below shows the top two:

Tip: *Click on the Details link at the top right to make the page display the details of all plugins in the list.*

The one version in the above list with the **PPAPI** type is the native version and the only one that needs to be retained. All the other versions (with the **NPAPI** type) need to disabled immediately. Apart from being a performance hazard, the NPAPI versions of Flash can pose security risks. Disabling them is always a wise thing to do.

If only one Adobe Flash plugin shows up in this list, it is the native one and should not be disabled. Disabling rogue versions should take care of your Flash woes on Chrome and prevent it from freezing the tabs (most of the time, that is).

4. Make Chrome warn you before closing multiple tabs, mute all tabs and more
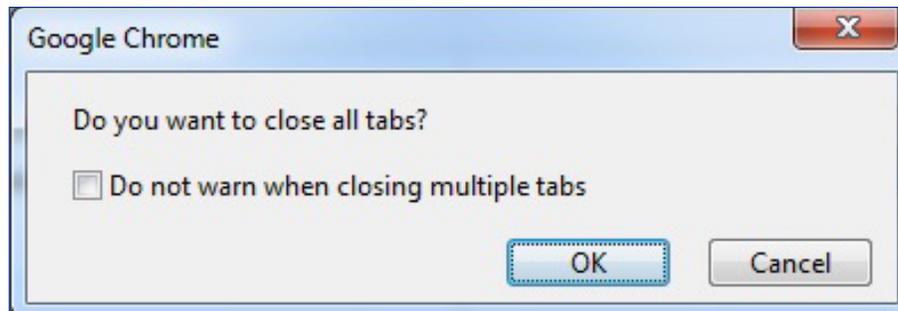
The image above shows a feature that Chrome users have been demanding for a long time. For reasons unknown to me, Chrome still lacks it. That means if you mistakenly click on the red X on the top right of Chrome, it instantly closes, taking down all open tabs with it. Unlike other browsers, it does not give you a warning like the one you see above.

Not to worry. You can get this and more such features through an amazing extension called Chrome Toolbox. And here's the funny part: This extension has been created by Google. I wonder what stops them from including it by default in Chrome.

I have to say, though, that Google has done a fabulous job with this extension. It's packed with features, many of them quite useful for regular Chrome users. After you install it, it sits on your extensions bar and shows certain options when clicked.
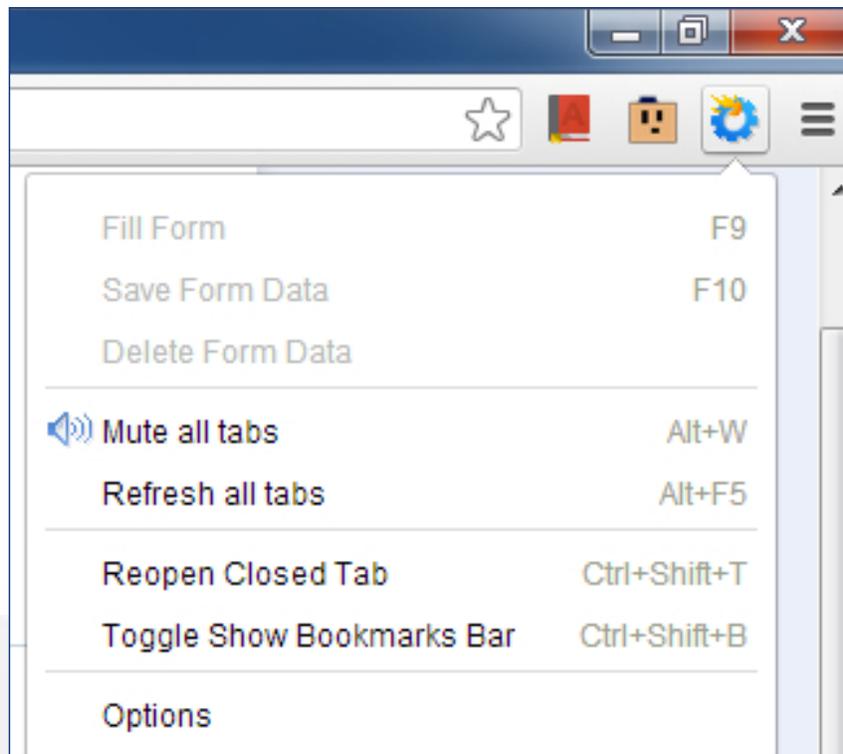
As the above image shows, there's **Mute all tabs, Refresh all tabs** and an **Options** link that leads you to a page where you can set many more preferences.

Chrome Toolbox Options

A quick access tool that allows you to put your favorite browser commands in one drop down menu, save unsubmitted form data, magnify images, view videos in standalone windows, and define shortcuts to open all links in any bookmark folder.

| General | Form Data | Quick Launch | Shortcuts & Menu | Other Extensions |

Floating Toolbar

☑ When the mouse pointer hovers over an image, show image floating toolbar (magnifier, view original image, set wallpaper)

☑ When the mouse pointer hovers over a video, show video floating toolbar (view video in standalone window)

Tab

☑ Don't close current browser window when closing last tab, create a new tab instead

☐ When clicking on a link, always open it in a new tab

⦿ Open in front tab ◯ Open in background tab

☑ Double click on a tab to close it

☑ Confirm before closing multiple tabs

☑ Scroll mouse wheel on the tab strip to switch tabs

☐ When pressing enter in address bar with a URL in it, open the URL in a new tab

Context Menu

☑ Enable context menu for setting wallpapper

Many of the options, like the **Confirm before closing multiple tabs** one, are checked by default. You may toggle them on or off according to your preferences.

The Chrome Toolbox extension offers a huge number of customizations and might seem overwhelming at first. If you decide to stick with it, I suggest you spend some time exploring its **Details** page on the Chrome Web Store as well as all the tabs on its **Options** page. You may or may not need all of them, but go through them carefully first to understand what they do and how they might help you in your daily work.

5. Search specific websites right from the Omnibox

If you've performed a search on a website, next time you can search it directly from the Omnibox.

Here's how: Let's say that at some point you used the search bar at the top right of the homepage on my blog, Guiding Tech. Now if you want to do that again, just type a few letters of the site's name in the address bar, like **'guid',** and hit the *Tab* key on your keyboard. You'll get a *Search guidingtech.com* option that'll allow you to search that site directly from the Chrome address bar.
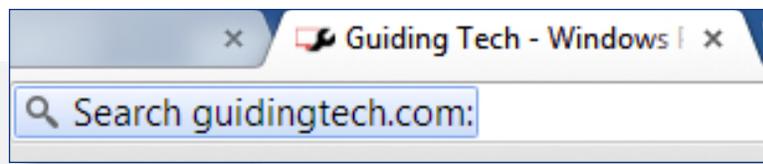
As shown in the image above, a blue search site bar appears after you hit the *Tab* key. Simply type your search query right there and Chrome will search the site for you. Helps you skip a step.

THE CATCH: You need to have searched the site using its native search bar at least once. Since most sites these days have a built-in search bar, that shouldn't be a problem.

6. Create special keywords to visit sites quickly

Chrome usually auto-completes the names of your most-visited sites. If you visit Facebook frequently on Chrome, for example, all you need to do is type the letter 'f' and Chrome will instantly auto-complete your entry to 'facebook.com'. After that, a tap on the *Enter* key is all it takes to visit the site.

But if you have another favorite website with a name that starts with the letters 'f' and 'a', you might find Chrome's auto-completing 'f' to 'facebook.com' slightly annoying. You'd need to either continue typing until Chrome auto-completes to the URL you desire, or select the preferred result from the list of auto-fill options.

All that is good, but there's a better way to set up keywords for favorite websites so you can just type a letter and then hit *Enter* to visit them.

Let's say both 'google.com' and 'google.com/reader' are in the list of your most-visited sites. You could set up the keywords 'g' and 'gr' for both respectively, and enter these letters before pressing the *Enter* key to get to either site quickly.

Here are the steps to do this:

1. **Right-click** anywhere on the empty space on the Omnibox and click on the option that says *Edit search engines*.
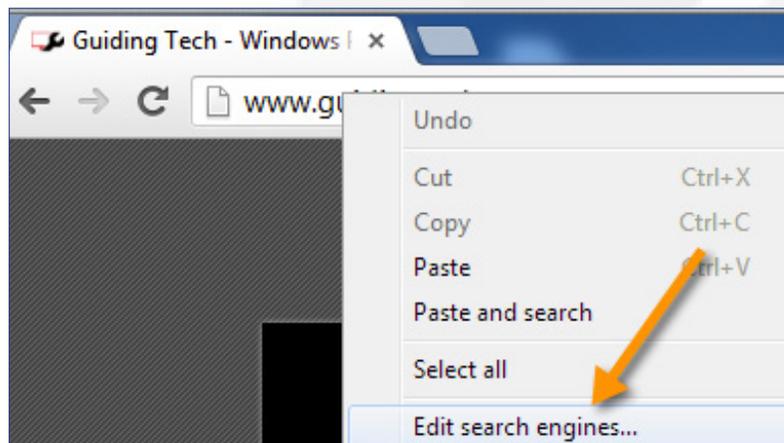
2. This will open a page that will list the default search engines on Chrome.

3. Here, scroll down to the bottom to the point where it has the tabs named **Add a new search engine**, **Keyword** and more.
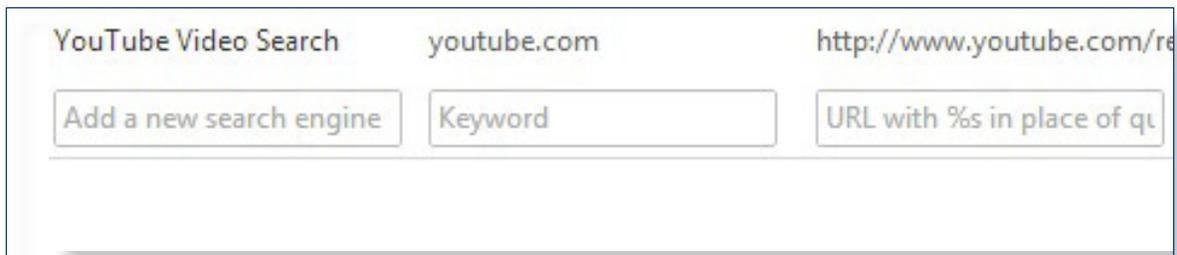
| YouTube Video Search | youtube.com | http://www.youtube.com/re |
| Add a new search engine | Keyword | URL with %s in place of qu |

4. Although the third tab asks for 'URL with %s in place of...' simply enter the URL of the website for which you want to set up a keyword short-cut. And that's the secret. The image below shows how I added the keyword 'gt' for Guiding Tech.

| Guiding Tech | gt | http://www.guidingtech.c |

All I did was enter the name of the site (my blog, Guiding Tech, in this case), a key-word (as you see above, I used two letters for that: **'gt'**) and the complete site URL starting with http://. That's it, hit OK and you're done. If I need to quickly visit Guiding Tech on Chrome, all I need to do is type 'gt' and hit **Enter**. Chrome will instantly jump to the site.

You may use this trick to set up any number of keyword-site combinations.

Of course, you should choose these keywords wisely so you don't end up forgetting them. Overall, however, this is a nice way to increase your everyday browsing pro-ductivity by a bit.

7. Master these Keyboard Shortcuts

Some people stress about mastering keyboard shortcuts for every tool. Shortcuts definitely help us work more quickly but chances are you'll always do certain activities more comfortably with the mouse.

Still, learning some main keyboard shortcuts for the tools you use every day makes sense. That's why I'm starting this book with some of the most popular keyboard shortcuts available for Chrome.

1. **Ctrl + T (Windows) / Command + T (Mac)** for opening a new tab.

2. **Ctrl + Shift + T (Windows) / Command + Shift + T (Mac)** for quickly reopening a closed tab. You can use this to **instantly restore an accidentally closed tab**.

3. **Ctrl + Shift + N (Windows) / Command + Shift + N (Mac)** for opening an incognito window for private browsing. I use this very often, not for the obvious reasons but for tasks like opening a new instance of Gmail for logging into another account.

4. **Ctrl + J (Windows) / Command + Shift + J (Mac)** for opening the *Downloads* page.

5. **Alt+ D or Ctrl + L (Windows) / Command + L (Mac)** for jumping to the address bar.
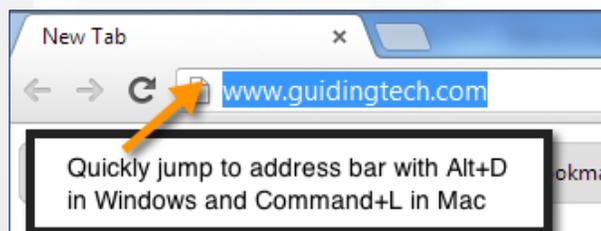
6. **Alt + right arrow or left arrow in Windows** for going back a page or moving forward a page, respectively. In Mac, you could use the default two-finger gestures for the same.

7. **Ctrl + D (Windows) / Command + D (Mac)** for saving the web page you're on as a bookmark.

8. **Ctrl + Shift + Delete (Windows) / Command + Shift + Delete (Mac)** for opening the *Clear Browsing Data* window.

9. Hit spacebar to scroll down web pages one page at a time (works on both Windows and Mac).

10. To open a website in a new tab, type its URL in the address bar and instead of hitting *Enter*, do **Alt + Enter (Windows) / Command + Enter (Mac)** to open it in a background tab. For example, type google.com in the address bar and hit **Alt + Enter.** It'll open Google in a new tab.

This way you can open a number of websites one after another while staying on the same tab.

> *Tip:* If you do not add the .com suffix, you'll find that Chrome considers a site name as a search query and opens the search results in a new tab. This trick can be utilized as a way to quickly search in a new tab without leaving a current tab.

11. **Ctrl + H (Windows) / Command + Y (Mac)** to open your *Browsing History* page. The browsing history page of Chrome also features a search button that helps you quickly unearth a previously visited website that you can't recall.

So, those are the keyboard shortcuts I feel every Chrome user should know and remember. Of course there are many more but let's be honest, you can't remember all of them and neither would you need all of them often. Learning the important ones makes more sense.

I think the aforementioned shortcuts should cover 95% of your Chrome usage and make you significantly more productive. And though these might help you save only a few seconds every day, such seconds do add up over a period of time.

8. Set Chrome to Restore Previous Pages

When Chrome reopens after a sudden browser crash it asks if previously opened tabs should be restored. You can set Chrome to **always** restore previously opened tabs whenever it is started through the following simple process:

1. Click on the Chrome *Options* icon, the set of parallel horizontal lines on the top right (known as the Chrome menu).

2. Click on *Settings*.

3. There, under the *On startup* section, select *Continue where I left off*.
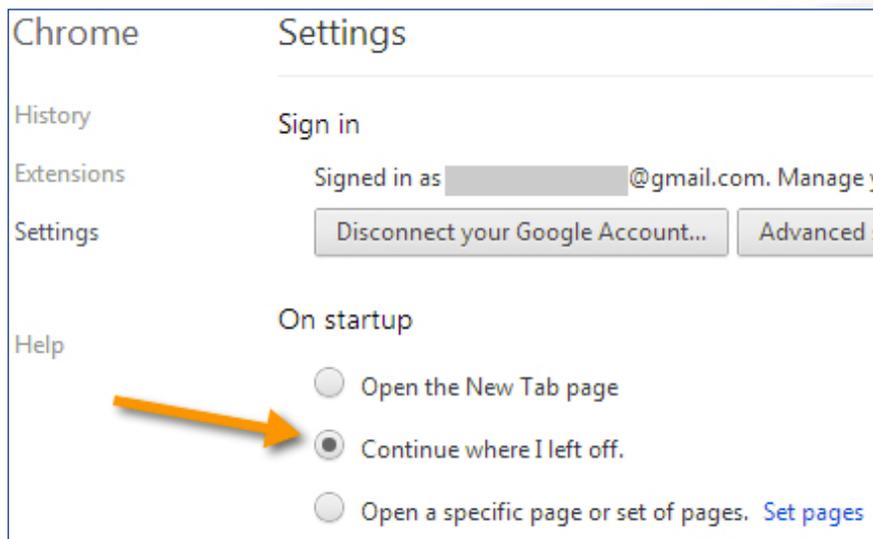
This will ensure Chrome doesn't start with the default new tab page and instead opens all the previously opened tabs from your last browsing session.

9. Too many tabs consuming CPU and RAM? Use one of these three extensions to deal with them efficiently

When numerous tabs are left open they eat up memory and CPU, making the browser slow.

Keeping only a few tabs open at one time is, of course, the easiest solution, but this may not be the right approach for folks like me who have to work with many tabs at once. I keep tabs like Gmail, Facebook and Guiding Tech (my blog) pinned to one corner of my screen so I can quickly look at them as needed. I also keep coming across new web pages which stack up as open tabs pretty quickly.

For true tab nirvana, one needs a novel solution. Below are three such solutions in the form of three useful extensions.

Let's see how these can help you reduce tab overload.

9.1. TooManyTabs

TooManyTabs is a useful tool for managing Chrome tabs and making sure they are not the reason for a browser crash, or slow speed.
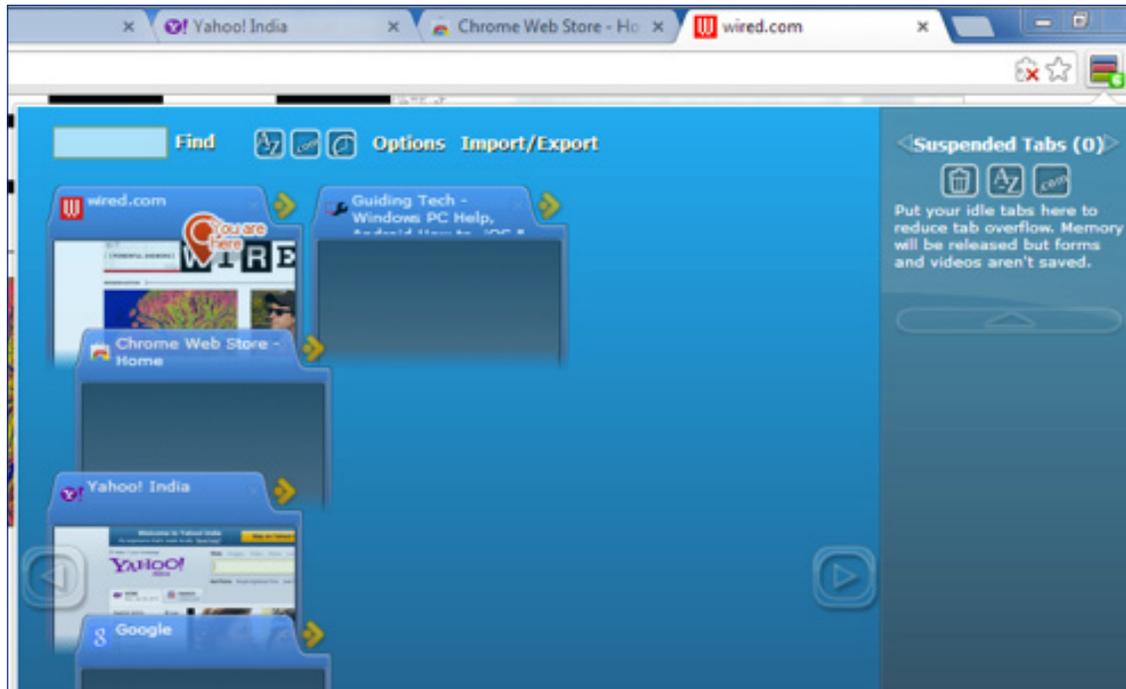
After the TooManyTabs extension is installed, a small icon appears in the extensions bar. Click on the icon to see a thumbnail preview of all open tabs as shown in the image above.

Here's how this extension helps you manage your tabs:

> **Preview each open tab:** Thumbnails display the content of your open tabs while a marker shows the tab that's in use at the moment.

> **Locate tab with a search or sort by name, web address or creation time:** When you have too many tabs open, a bit of order (and sanity) is provided by

these tab management features. Use the **_Find_** bar at the top for these actions.

Suspend tabs with a click: Click on the arrow next to any tab in the preview and suspend it to conserve memory. Click on the tabs in the **_Suspended Tabs_** column to restore them.

Reopen recently closed tabs: Any recently closed tab can also be restored with a click on its thumbnail preview.

Colorful themes: Set the color of the TooManyTabs pop-up interface with a click on any of the six default colors. You can choose from many more in **_Options_**.

Import from Firefox: The add-on's Firefox counterpart has been available for a long time. If you've been using it, you can import your settings from there. You can also create a back-up file by exporting the data.

A few extra settings: Go into **_Options_** (above the thumbnails) and configure TooManyTabs to work for you. A useful setting you can tweak is **_Custom Columns_**, which can be really handy when you have a multitude of tabs open.

You may suspend tabs you don't need immediately using TooManyTabs, and restore them instantly later. This extension definitely makes Chrome consume fewer system resources.

9.2. OneTab

Save up to 95% memory and reduce tab clutter' is how OneTab pitches itself to Chrome users. And I have to say this isn't just clever copywriting to lure people to give OneTab a try. This extension really can help push down memory and CPU usage almost instantly.
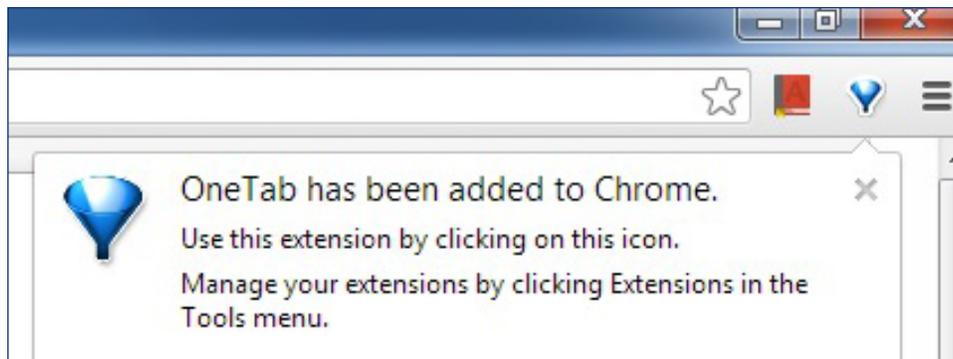
The way it works is quite simple: Click on the OneTab button on the extensions bar and it will collapse all open tabs into a list. You can later restore the tabs one by one, or all at once.

Here's how it looks after you've clicked the OneTab button:
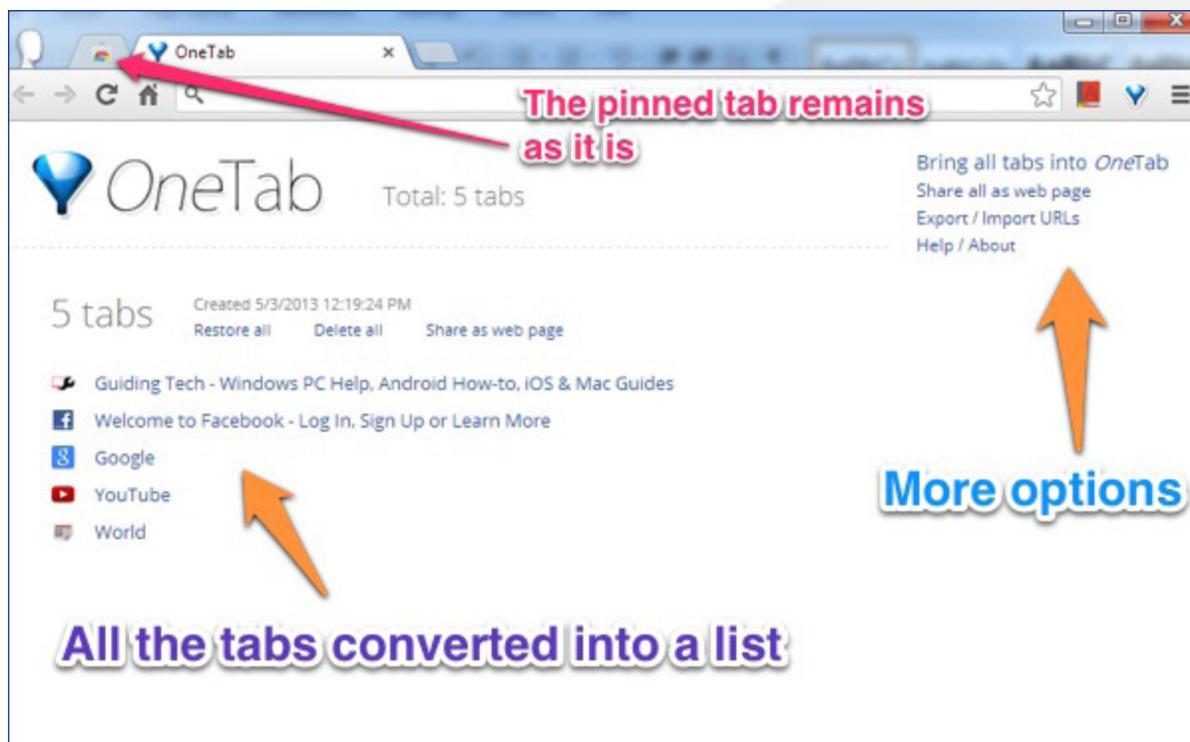
OneTab gives options to restore or delete all tabs and to share them as a web page or imported/exported links. Any tabs already pinned to one corner remain untouched.

This tool also shows historical data, meaning if you used it a week ago with a different set of tabs, it'll show a list of those on the same page just in case you want to restore some of them.

THE CATCH: Very few things come without their flaws, and OneTab is no exception. When you do a *restore all*, OneTab opens all the tabs in a new window instead of opening them in the same window. Unnecessary, if you ask me.

I think OneTab could work well as a crisis-management solution. Whenever you start experiencing some lag and Chrome starts indicating that it's getting uncomfortable, click on OneTab to give Chrome some breathing room (and save yourself the hassle of dealing with a non-responsive browser). OneTab reduces Chrome's memory footprint by getting rid of multiple tabs while ensuring you have an easy way to get them back.

9.3. The Great Suspender

As the name indicates, The Great Suspender suspends tabs instead of closing them, similar to what TooManyTabs does. Clicking on this extension's icon produces four options: *Suspend this tab, Suspend all tabs, Reload all tabs* and *Settings.*
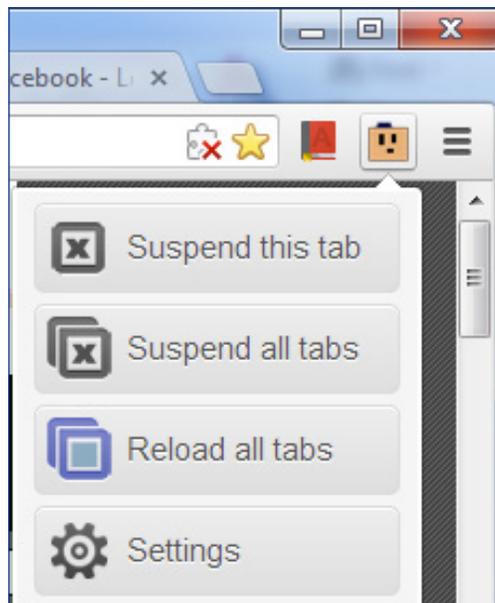
Click on **Suspend this tab** to make the contents of a tab disappear. While its header is grayed out, the tab remains at its position and can be reloaded in the same spot.
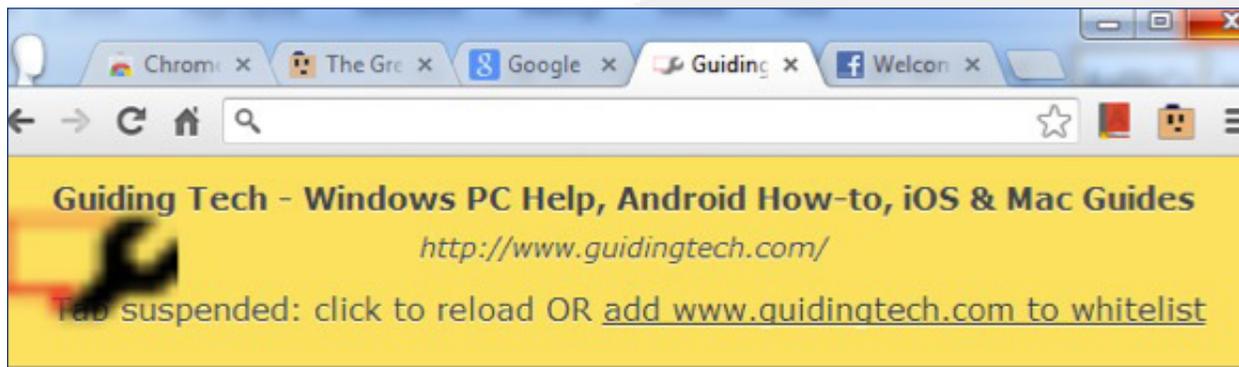
You may suspend tabs one at a time or all at once.

Click on **Settings** to open the following screen through which you can choose to suspend a tab after it's been inactive for a certain period of time. You may also select

the auto-unsuspend-when-tab-is-in-focus feature. Plus there's a way to create a whitelist of websites to ignore.
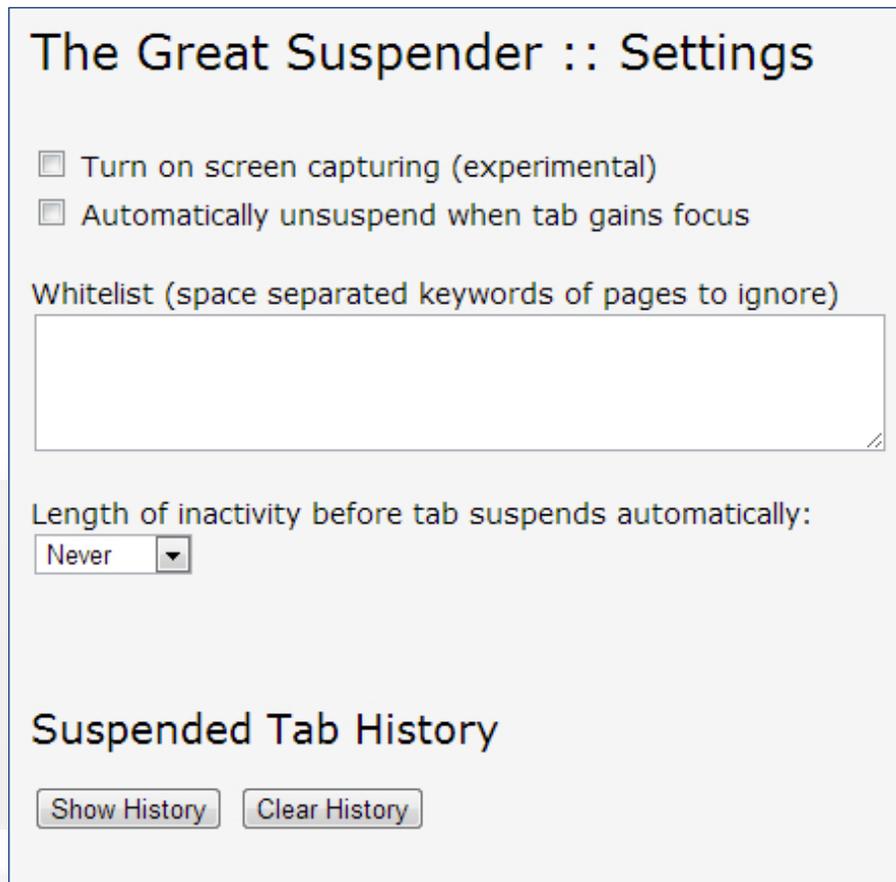
Suspended tabs remain part of the browsing session, meaning they will be restored along with the other tabs whenever the browser is re-opened. Uninstalling the extension deletes all tabs (including pinned tabs), so make sure to unsuspend tabs first if you decide to get rid of the extension.

The Great Suspender usually works well but on certain occasions it cannot suspend some tabs, including some Chrome app tabs. So don't be surprised if a tab stays active even after you've tried suspending it using this tool.

Remember that suspending a tab is different from closing a tab, and so is any increase in Chrome performance that might result. While The Great Suspender definitely contributes to performance improvement, such improvements are not as great as those OneTab can achieve.

Each of the aforementioned extensions—TooManyTabs, OneTab and The Great Suspender—has its pros and cons. If you can work with your tabs in a list and do not need them open all the time, OneTab may be the best choice for you. If you'd like more options and would rather suspend than close tabs, you may prefer TooManyTabs or The Great Suspender.

# 10. Instantly access various Chrome settings with these Chrome:// URLs

If you hardly touch the mouse or touchpad while browsing the web, then you're going to like this. Chrome offers a very quick and easy way to access many of its important option pages.

Not many Chrome users know about these shortcuts, so this will also help in boosting your smartness quotient while showcasing your Chrome skills to friends or family.

Let's check them out.

10.1. chrome://settings

Typing chrome://settings in the address bar instantly opens the Chrome *Settings* page. We've already seen so many useful changes and customizations that can be implemented through this page. Hence reaching it as quickly as possible will help in enhancing your productivity.
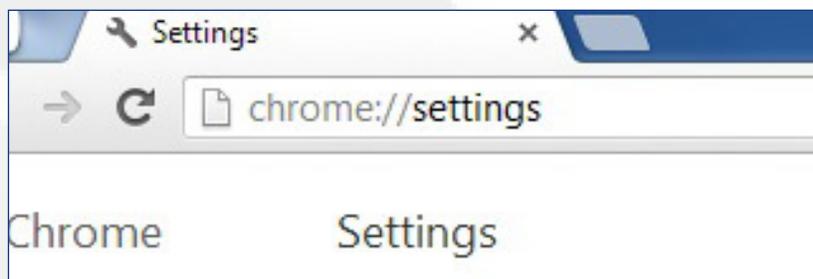
> **Tip:** *Utilize the keyboard shortcut* **Ctrl+L (Command + L for Mac)** *to instantly jump to the address bar.*

10.2. chrome://downloads

Easily access Chrome's *Downloads* page by typing chrome://downloads in the address bar.

10.3. chrome://extensions

Want to avoid the mouse-click routine to reach the *Extensions* page each time? Just type chrome://extensions in the address bar, and voila, you're there!

10.4. chrome://plugins

This one helps you get to the *Plugins* page where you can enable Click to play for certain plugins as I have already shown in the first tip.

> **Tip:** *You might want to further shorten these URLs. It's easy. If you remember the steps in the section about creating special keywords to visit sites quickly, you can apply the same to all these URLs. See the image below. I've set up the keyword 'cs' for the settings page. All I need to do is type 'cs' in the address bar, hit Enter and there I am on that page!*
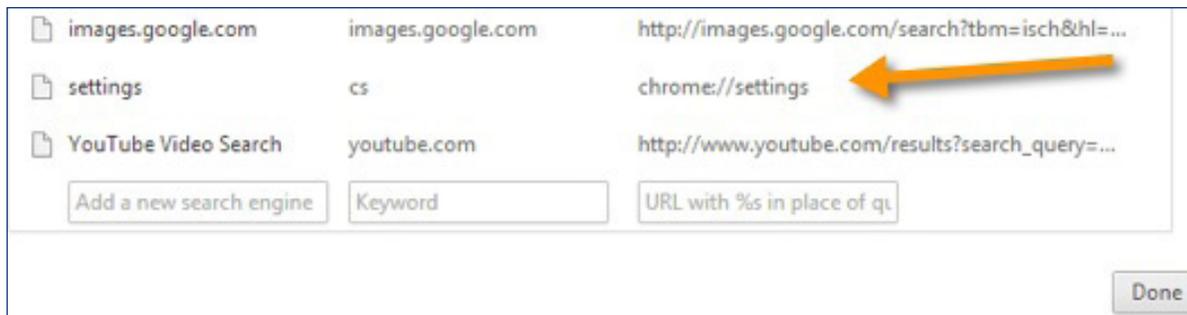
10.5. chrome://history

Figured it out, right? Yes, the browser history page. Use the above URL to quickly access it.

10.6. chrome://chrome-urls

The above five shortcuts are the most useful ones among all such URLs that Chrome provides. But if you're interested in trying out the others, just visit chrome://chrome-urls to see a list of them all.

Liked the tips?
Get *The Ultimate Chrome Productivity Guide*

As mentioned earlier, this short ebook is a part of the more comprehensive ebook called **The Ultimate Chrome Productivity Guide.**

The Ultimate Chrome Productivity Guide is a beautifully-designed PDF that includes a huge number of essential as well as advanced Chrome tips and productivity guides which any Chrome user (average or experienced) is likely to find quite useful. It comes as a DRM-free PDF download that can be read on any device, and has a 30-day money back guarantee.

All you need to do is click here — The Ultimate Chrome Productivity Guide or just *go to* **www.chromeproductivity.com** on your browser.

About the Author

Abhijeet Mukherjee is the owner and editor of Guiding Tech, a popular blog on personal technology. He is also a long-time contributor to some of the best technology and productivity blogs in the world.

Over the years Abhijeet has written some extremely popular posts on his own blog and on other blogs that have attracted hundreds of thousands of readers.

His articles on personal technology have also been syndicated by well-known sites such as The Business Insider.

He does not claim to be a geek (his friends disagree) but he does like spending time with the tools he uses in order to figure out how to get the most out of them. Productivity has been the focus of most of his writings to date because that's what he's good at—playing with software and online tools to discover ways to use them more efficiently.

You may email him at abhijeet@guidingtech.com. He can also be found on Twitter and Google+.