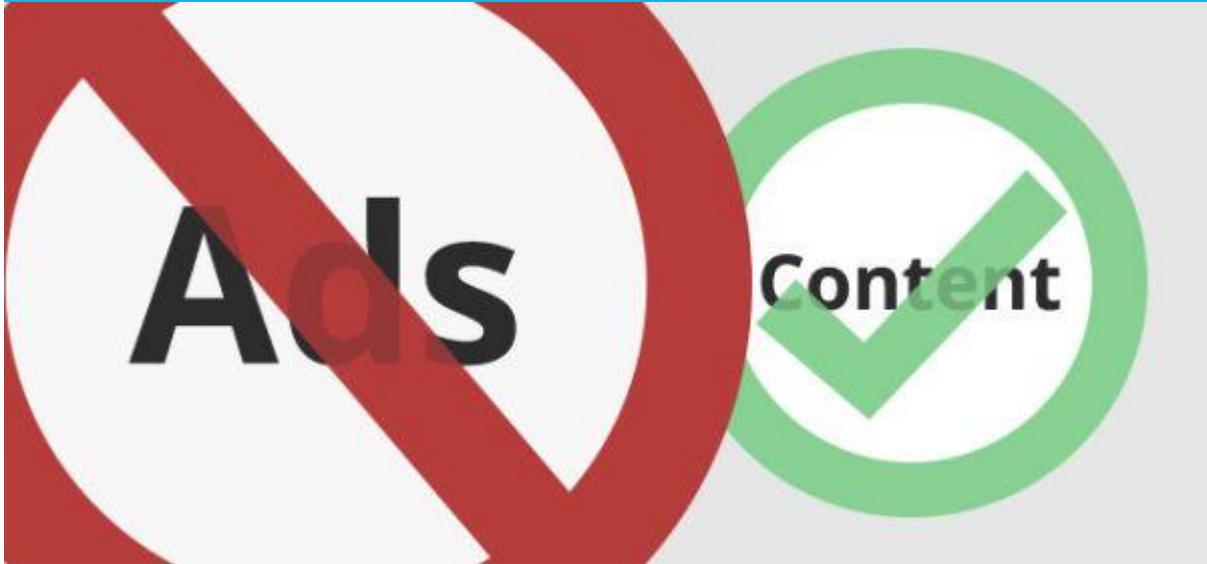


# NDA Tasmania

## Ad blockers



**This article outlines the pros and cons of ad blockers and makes recommendations for their installation and use**

### What is an ad blocker?

A couple of issues ago we [wrote a few words](#) on how to disable the autoplay of sound and video on web browsers and apps. Ad blockers also address this issue, and deal with the greater irritant of the unrestricted and sometimes dangerous use of click-through ads.

An ad blocker is software you download and install on your device - PC, laptop, tablet or smartphone - that blocks advertising, trackers and other third party scripts from running. The result is a much cleaner and more readable view of web pages, faster page loading and more secure web browsing.

### The upside of ad blockers

The business model that drives many commercial websites is based on the sale of advertising space, just like the traditional 'old' media. Some of the differences between advertising on the web and advertising on old media include the following:

Advertising on the web can be deceptive in ways that the old media could only dream about. Click-bait ads encourage you to click on a link that at best may take you to a site you don't want to visit and at worst may attempt to install malware or a virus on your device. For example, the home page of the popular download site *download.cnet.com* contains 39 ads. These include several fake download buttons that mimic the colour and shape of the Cnet download button, to the extent that it is difficult to determine which is legitimate.



Advertising on the web is targeted at your personal interests and preferences, based on your browsing history. So if, for example, you have been googling accommodation in Melbourne, don't be surprised if you see a lot of ads for Melbourne hotels on the web pages you visit over the next few days. Most of us are quite happy with this, so long as you don't mind the privacy aspects of your browsing history and location being recorded. Advertising on the web is dynamic. This can be irritating in several ways. Loading ads can force you to re-scroll the screen to re-position content, they result in longer page-load times, they use up your expensive download quota, videos run automatically by default and in-text ads interrupt the flow of page content.

### The downside of ad blockers

Most sites on the web are free. The revenue they earn from advertising pays for site maintenance and the wages of people who produce the content. If enough people use ad blockers and this business model is broken, then sites will have to find some other form of revenue, possibly subscription-based, or close down.

### How ad blockers are funded

Many ad blockers are free to download and either seek a donation or have a subscription-based 'premium' setting. They also derive revenue by whitelisting websites that pay a fee to be exempted from ad blocking. This fee may be a percentage of revenue derived from the whitelisted advertising.

They walk a tightrope between allowing some websites to display ads while still blocking sufficient ads to encourage people like you and me to install them. They achieve this by defining an advertising code that whitelisted sites must comply with. The code typically determines ad placement (not obscuring site content or inline with content), a clear distinction between advertising and content, no autoplay sound or video, no ads that reload if the page content does not change, maximum ad size limits and so on.

Ads on whitelisted sites are usually enabled by default in the ad blocker, although the user has the option of disabling this feature.

### A recommended adblocker

After reviewing several products we selected Adblock as the tool of choice. This was based on its widespread adoption across the industry and availability on several platforms, including multiple Windows browsers, iOS and Android. It is also free of charge.

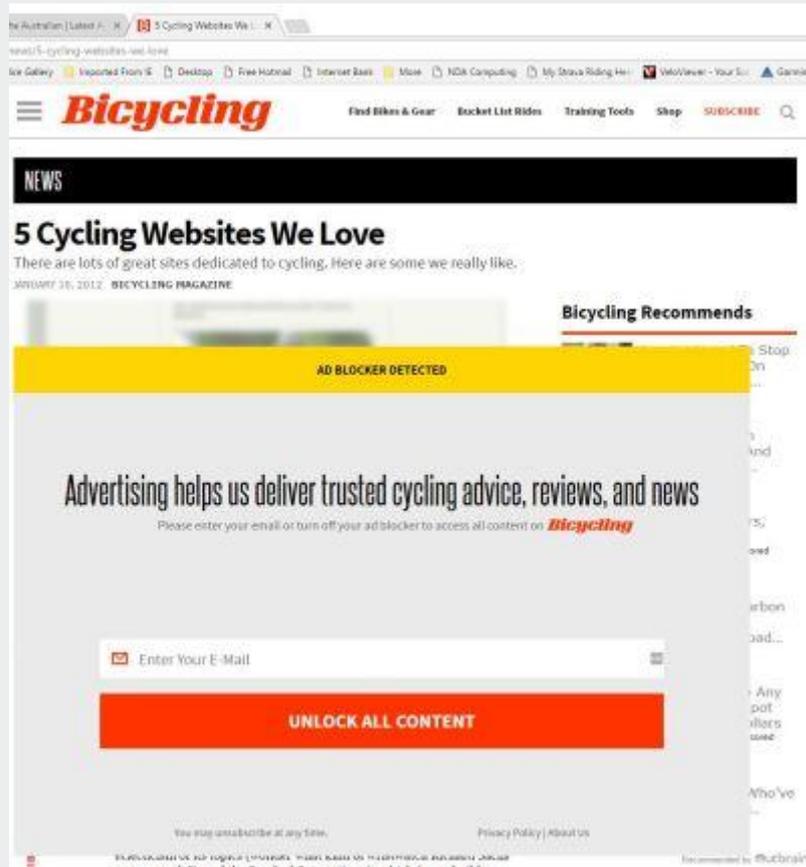
Once downloaded and activated, the software sits happily on the browser toolbar where it can be clicked to display a range of options.



Adblock actively seeks donations, but based on its business model of charging whitelisted sites 30% of revenue we didn't think a donation was necessary.

We visited a number of sites, with Adblock both enabled and disabled. Sure enough, with Adblock enabled the pages were much cleaner and easier to read. Adblock records the number of ads blocked, both by page and in total.

Only one site we visited, *bicycling.com*, detected the ad blocker. Access to the site was restricted unless you entered an email address or disabled the blocker.



With trusted sites that you want to support, you can choose the ad blocker option “Don’t run on pages on this domain” to permit advertising.

We also installed Adblock for Mobile from the iPhone Appstore. This was particularly effective on the small screen where ads are much more intrusive.

### Summary

We were late to this technology, but it has now become a standard part of the configuration of our devices. Properly used, you have a cleaner and safer browsing experience without threatening the viability of sites you might want to support.

Read about NDA's training courses and qualifications [here](#).



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