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[Internet Explorer 8, to Be or Not to Be](#)

Standards-compliant

[Internet Explorer 8](#) is still approximately a year before the final version will be released, in fact Microsoft has not even made available the first beta for the browser, but the successor of Internet Explorer 7 has already been taking hits. The fact that IE8 has to face an early barrage of fire is not by any means a surprise. The browser comes with the promise of the account for all the shortcomings of Internet Explorer 6 and the caveats introduced with by Internet Explorer 7. While dogfooding IE8 after an entire year of exclusive in-house development and testing, Microsoft pulled a little publicity stunt at the end of 2007 and revealed that the browser passed the Acid2 test. However, while rendering it correctly, the smiley face of the Acid2 test is designed to represent a step further in terms of standards support for IE8 and Microsoft. Håkon Wium Lie, chief technology officer of Opera Software, reveals via [News.com](#) that he is more than skeptical when it comes down to the [browser actually passing the test](#). "Recently, Microsoft announced that Internet Explorer version 8 can render Acid2, and it showed a screenshot to back the claim. The news was received with joy and excitement in the Web-authoring community. Finally, it seems, Microsoft has decided to take Web standards seriously. Designers will no longer have to spend countless hours trying to get their pages to look right in Internet Explorer while adhering to standards. Unfortunately, I think that the celebration is premature. I predict that IE 8 will not pass Acid2, after all," Wium Lie forecasted. By passing the Acid2 test, IE8 is on par with rival products such as Opera, Safari and the upcoming Firefox 3.0. But in a short while, the Web Standards Project will publish Acid3. The new test will mean that all the browsers will have to take it from scratch yet again as none will be able to correctly render Acid3 by default. Wium Lie explained that Acid3 will not use a static webpage, such as the one offered by its predecessor Acid2, but a dynamic web application. Wium Lie reveals that he considers Microsoft to attempt one out of three strategies in order to pass Acid2. "One scenario could be that IE 8 will require users or authors to 'opt in' to support standards. For example, in order to render Acid2 correctly, users could be required to modify IE 8's default settings. This breaks with the guidelines of the test, and IE 8 will therefore not pass in this scenario. A second scenario could be that Microsoft requires Web pages to change the default settings by flagging that they really, really want to be rendered correctly. Web pages already have a way to say this (called 'doctype switching', which is supported by all browsers), but Microsoft has all but announced that IE 8 will support yet another scheme," Wium Lie stated. The fact of the matter is that Microsoft worked closely with The Web Standards Project (in the WaSP-Microsoft Task Force), in order to come up with the best possible solution that strikes a balance between offering advanced standards support, as well as backwards compatibility. In this context, IE8 will function in three ways. In the "Quirks mode", nothing will change. In "Standards mode" everything is the same as in Internet Explorer 7. And then, there will be IE8 Standards Mode. It has to be mentioned at this point in time that Microsoft did pass the Acid2 test with Internet Explorer 8 running in IE8 Standards mode. The browser would have failed the test in the remaining two modes. "A third scenario could be to hard-code the Web address of Acid2 into IE 8. This way, the page is given special treatment to make it look like the browser is passing the test. It should be obvious that this breaks the spirit of the test and doesn't warrant a passing grade. I predict that Microsoft will implement at least one of these scenarios to limit the impact of standards. This would be damaging for the Web, and I therefore hope that my prediction is completely and absolutely wrong. The IE 8 team has shown that it can render Acid2 correctly. Now it's time for Microsoft to put its code to good use," Wium Lie concluded.