

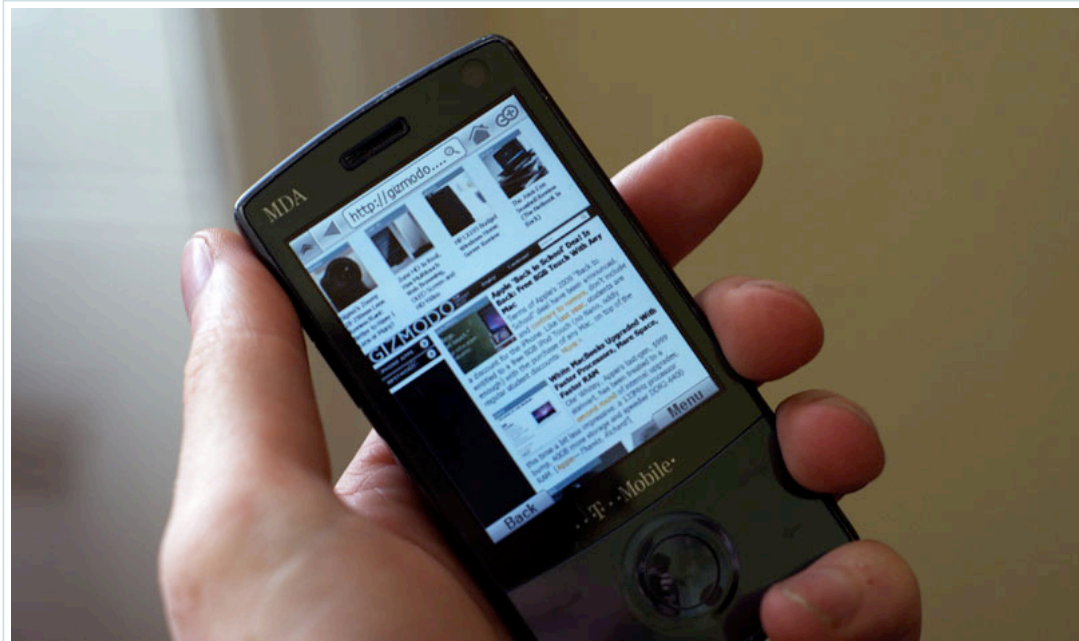
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SKYFIRE

## Skyfire Leaves Beta, Steals Windows Mobile Browsing Crown

By John Herrman, 9:00 AM on Wed May 27 2009, 7,170 views



Skyfire, the server-compressed mobile browser that promises "the full web," i.e. Flash support, on Windows Mobile and Symbian phones, has graduated from its **excruciatingly long** testing period. In a word, it's great.

The release notes point to a few major changes from **earlier versions** of the browser, emphasizing better text rendering, faster startup, easier controls and improved compatibility with complex AJAX-driven pages like Facebook and Gmail. To be honest, the changes aren't massive, but a few of them make noticeable differences.

Rendering quality was never an issue with Skyfire, and it's hard to discern any huge improvements on this front. Pages are still compressed server-side, which keeps things moving quickly. As a result, pages load extremely fast—I was able to pull down the Giz frontpage, flash ads and all, in under 20 seconds—but image (and unfortunately, text) resolution isn't as high as it would be on an uncompressed browser like Opera Mobile or Mobile Safari. Thankfully, 1.0 is optimized such that even zoomed-out, smaller text is mostly legible, and in a welcome improvement upon the betas, instantly becomes clear when zoomed.



About that zooming: controls have been spruced up all around, especially for touch users. Previous versions of the browser suffered from awkward zooming quirks and poor text reflowing, but these issues are by and large resolved in 1.0. Double-taps behave much more predictably, and most sites are easy enough to traverse thanks to smoothed-out panning. You can also click without zooming in, which Skyfire will *usually* interpret correctly.

Flash video viewing has always been Skyfire's banner feature, allowing users to watch native video embeds and services like Hulu on their phones, but it's largely unchanged for version 1.0. Playback is still smooth and loading is quick enough, although taps have a tendency to misregister, meaning you're better off initiating flash video with the browser's onscreen mouse cursor and a d-pad, assuming you have that luxury.

It's not quite perfect, but in the disparate, but as far as Windows Mobile and Symbian browsers go, it's as close as you're going to get. Well, at least until [Opera Mobile 9.7](#) comes out.

On the rumored BlackBerry version of the app, Skyfire has issued confirmation that they're "planning" one. Funny, since we've already [seen it](#). For now, you can download Skyfire for Windows Mobile or Symbian now by navigating to [get.skyfire.com](http://get.skyfire.com) on your phone's browser. You'll have to uninstall any previous versions of the browser before you can use 1.0—annoyingly, there's no direct way to upgrade. Release notes below. [[Skyfire](#)]

#### What's new:

Thumbnail interaction. Now you can click on links immediately after the page loads without having to zoom in. This enhancement is especially helpful for high resolution phones, and for familiar sites where you know right away where you want to click. It makes getting to the content you want on

the page simpler, quicker and more efficient.

Improved Zoom. Double-tap or double-click to zoom over any element, including links, images or videos. The zoom interaction is smoother and more responsive as well. Best of all: when you zoom in you will get readable text instantly (beforehand text was blurry and took a while to become sharp).

Enhanced Navigation. When you navigate back or forward, you return to the last viewport (e.g. zoom level and portion of the page). Thus eliminating the need to pan and zoom into the section you were viewing on the previous page. We remember even the viewport when you select a page from your history. We have also added shortcut keys, (9) for forward and (7) for backward navigation.

Improved page handling. Enhancements have been made especially for AJAX-intensive sites such as Facebook and Gmail. If larger parts of the page get updated then the client will more quickly and accurately reflect this.

iFrame handling. We have a solution for full-width iFrames in Skyfire

Fast start. We changed both the sequence and behavior of the Skyfire launch so you get started as quickly as possible. You can type a search or URL in the Superbar while Skyfire is connecting in the background. You can put Skyfire to work before the start page is even loaded. Plus, we've improved connection performance.

Reconnect to last state. When you leave Skyfire in the background Skyfire will disconnect to preserve battery life. Once you come back to it (after minutes, hours, days) it will reload the same page to the same zoom level and focus. Thus you can continue right where you left off. When you exit and start again, Skyfire you will always land on the start page.

Connection helper. We have a new mechanism in place to detect when connections cannot be established to Skyfire servers. If this is due to a network configuration (common in GSM land), then we provide suggestions to help out. This is especially useful if you are with a carrier/data plan that places restrictions on certain APN configurations, which interferes with Skyfire.

Enhanced search results. Google results now include video, news articles, local results all blended on a single results page and ordered by relevance. Vertical search categories are still available. Improved RSS feed search. Find your favorite custom RSS feeds through the improved Add-Feed feature, found under the Customize menu on the start page. Search by site domain, feed URL, or even topical keywords.

Easier sharing of RSS items from start page. We've exposed a simple "Share this article" link below each RSS story displayed on your start page to make it easier to share interesting items to Twitter and Facebook

Remember last connection (Symbian only). Skyfire can now remember the last connection for you, so you will not have to choose a connection every single time. In addition if you want to change the connection type while you are in Skyfire you can do so.

#### Known issues in this release

HTTP Authentication (e.g. the native browser dialog that asks for username and password when going to certain sites) is not supported.

Text entry into Flash or Silverlight plug-ins is not supported.

Skyfire does not support 'local storage' mode for plug-ins. Thus the following will be affected: Netflix media player, Pandora media player, Rhapsody media player.

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