

Cookies



What are cookies?

When you go to some Web sites, the Web site computer writes information in a small text file (a cookie) to your hard drive. The next time you visit the same Web site, the server can retrieve the cookie and examine it.

Why do we have cookies?

Cookies were devised to maintain user information and to customize Web sites. They can track a user's transaction in a Web-based shopping site, or count how many times a user visits a site. Cookies can also post personal greetings, and store passwords and user names so that a subscriber won't have to re-enter them at each visit to a site. A cookie can store only the information you provide, or the choices you make, while visiting a Web site.

Where did the word "cookie" come from?

The name *cookie* derives from UNIX objects called *magic cookies*. These are tokens that are attached to a user or program and change depending on the areas entered by the user or program. Cookies are also sometimes called *persistent cookies* because they typically stay in the browser for long periods of time.

What are the advantages?

Cookies use the Web's ability to offer people customized content. They are like a sales person that gets to know a client's name, preferences, and habits on the WWW. If you fill out a registration form at a site it might create a cookie. When this cookie is placed on your computer, you will not be required to fill out another registration form when you return to the Web site that placed the cookie on your computer.

What are the disadvantages?

Cookies represent a potential loss of privacy. This makes some people uncomfortable. They are insidious. You do not know they are on your machine.

What can you do about cookies?

You can block out cookies, limit, delete or be made aware of cookie files.

Should I delete any cookies?

You can see how many cookie files you have and you can decide to delete some or all of them.

To delete a cookie file on Internet Explorer:

1. On the **Edit** menu, click **Preferences**.
2. Under **Receiving Files**, click **Cookies**.
3. Click the cookie you want to delete, and then click **Delete**.

To delete a cookie file on Netscape:

1. On the **Start menu**, click **Find**.
2. Search for a file folder called "cookies" (or cook*).

Should I leave cookie on or off? In other words, should I worry about cookies?

In my opinion, no. In some cases all school computer are set to accept cookies or some web site just won't work, for example: paid subscription sites. If you're feeling paranoid set your browser to warn you about cookies....but note this will become increasing annoying, Don't want a site to have your name and/or e-mail....make it up.

Resources:

[Cookie Central](http://www.cookiecentral.com/) - <http://www.cookiecentral.com/>

Features news, informative articles, and FAQs about Internet Cookies.

[Internet-Tips Cookie Page](http://internet-tips.net/Security/cookies.htm) - <http://internet-tips.net/Security/cookies.htm>

Many people consider cookies to be dangerous. Here is the truth about these small text flies.

[The Unofficial Cookie FAQ](http://www.cookiecentral.com/faq/) - <http://www.cookiecentral.com/faq/>

Contains an introduction to cookies and answers general questions. Includes sections on cookie fundamentals, creation, retrieval, and advanced topics. This FAQ is hosted by the Cookie Center site.

[The EPIC Cookies Page](http://www.epic.org/privacy/internet/cookies/) - <http://www.epic.org/privacy/internet/cookies/>

Includes information about how the IETF is considering a proposal to fix some of the problems with cookies, as well as articles on cookies and privacy, news items, and related Web sites.