

Cookies

Web site servers can "mark" a visitor. This is done by storing a piece of information in the visitor's browser. This is accomplished with cookies. Cookies can store database information, custom page settings, or just about anything that would make a site individual and customizable. A cookie is one or more lines of text that gets entered into the memory of a browser. There are many reasons a given site would wish to use cookies. These range from the ability to personalize information (like on My Yahoo or Excite), or to help with on-line sales/services (like on Amazon Books or Microsoft), or simply for the purposes of tracking popular links or demographics (like DoubleClick ads). Cookies can also securely store any personal data that the user has shared with a site.

You can delete cookies. If you delete your cookies though, you probably won't be able to use shopping carts, and you may trouble logging into many password-authenticated Web sites. Whether you use Netscape or Microsoft Internet Explorer (MSIE), your cookies are saved to a text file that you can delete. First close your browser. This is because all your cookies are held in memory until you close your browser. Deleting your cookie file entirely will cause you to "start from scratch" with every web site you usually visit. So, it may be preferable to open the cookies.txt file (in the case of Netscape) and remove only the entries you don't like, or go to the cookies folder (in the case of MSIE) and delete the files from servers you don't want.

Both Netscape and Microsoft Internet Explorer (MSIE) allow some level of cookie verification. Netscape 3.0 and MSIE 3.0 allow you only to "alert before accepting cookies." This is done through the Options/Network Preferences/Protocols menu (for Netscape) or the Internet Options/Advanced menu (for MSIE). This means you can read each cookie as it comes in, and hit "OK" to allow it, or "Cancel" to reject it.

Netscape 4.0 and MSIE 4.0 have menu options that allow you to accept all, some, or none of your incoming cookies. In addition, the "warn before accepting" feature is still present in both, if you want to screen your incoming cookies. In Netscape 4.0, go to the Edit/Preferences/Advanced menu. You will see all of the above choices. In MSIE 4.0, go to the View/Internet Options/Advanced menu. There you can accept all, warn before accepting, or reject all. MSIE 5.0 has a lot of menu and dialog changes, but you can still disable cookies. Go to the Tools/Internet Options/Security menu. In there, you can choose the security level for 4 different browsing conditions: Internet Sites, Local Sites, "Trusted" Sites, and Restricted Sites. If you select "Internet," and click on Custom Level, you'll get a dialog box where you can accept all, warn before accepting, or reject all cookies.

Once a cookie is rejected, it is thrown out and not saved to memory or disk. Servers will keep looking for the cookie even if you have discarded it and may try to replace it as you surf around.

Cookies are not dangerous to your computer. A cookie is a piece of text. It is not a program, or a plug-in. It cannot be used as a virus, and it cannot access your hard drive. Your browser can save cookie values to your hard disk if it needs to, but that is the limit of the effect on your system.

Cookies

4. Scroll down to the yellow exclamation icon under Security and choose one of the three options to regulate your use of cookies.

In Internet Explorer 3.0, you can View, Options, Advanced and click on the button that says Warn Before Accepting "Cookies."

If you're using Netscape Communicator 4.0:

On your Task Bar, click:

1. Edit, then
2. Preferences, then
3. click on Advanced.
4. Set your options in the box labeled "Cookies".

How to See Cookies You've Accepted:

If you're using Internet Explorer 5.0

On your task bar, click:

1. Tools, then
2. Internet Options.
3. Under the tab General (the default tab) click
4. Settings, then
5. View Files.

If you're using Internet Explorer 4.0

On your task bar, click:

1. View, then
2. Internet Options.
3. Under the tab General (the default tab) click
4. Settings, then
5. View Files.

Internet Explorer 3.0

On your Task Bar, click:

1. View, then
2. Options, then
3. Advanced, then
4. View Files.

Netscape Communicator 4.0:

Netscape bundles all cookies into one file on your hard drive. You'll need to find the file, which it calls Cookie.txt on Windows machines.

How to See the Code in a Cookie:

Just click on a cookie to open it. You'll see a short string of text and numbers. The numbers are your identification card, which can only be seen by the server that gave you the cookie.

Cookies

Web sources of information on cookies:

<http://www.cookiecentral.com/faq/> (by David Whalen)

<http://www.microsoft.com/info/cookies.htm>

Cookies: What They Are, Why You Are In Charge

A Cookie is:

A very small text file placed on your hard drive by a Web Page server. It is essentially your identification card, and cannot be executed as code or deliver viruses. It is uniquely yours and can only be read by the server that gave it to you.

A Cookie's Purpose is:

To tell the server that you returned to that Web page.

How a Cookie Helps You:

It saves you time. If you personalize pages, or register for products or services, a cookie helps Microsoft remember who you are. Next time you return, we know to show you the information you requested. Or, when you register for another product or service, all you need to do is type in your e-mail address and a password. We then fill in any questions you've already answered. Of course, if you never register or leave personal information with Microsoft, then the server only knows that someone with your cookie has returned to the Web site. You are in charge of deciding whether we know anything about you. But the more you tell us about yourself, the more we can help you find information or products you want. Remember: you can always edit any personal information you give Microsoft by stopping at the Profile Center.

How a Cookie Helps Microsoft:

It allows us to be more efficient. We can learn what information is important to our visitors, and what isn't. We can discard Web pages you don't use, and focus our efforts on information you need.

If You Want to Control Which Cookies You Accept:

You can order your browser to accept all cookies or to alert you every time a cookie is offered. Then you can decide whether to accept one or not.

If you're using Internet Explorer 5.0:

1. Choose Tools, then
2. Internet Options.
3. Click the Security tab,
4. Click Internet, then Custom Level.
5. Scroll down to Cookies and choose one of the two options.

If you're using Internet Explorer 4.0:

1. Choose View, then
2. Internet Options.
3. Click the Advanced tab,