



WHAT ARE COOKIES?

When speaking in computer terms, have you ever heard anyone tell you to 'look out for cookies' while surfing the Internet? Whatever! What in blazers are 'cookies' anyway, what is the big deal about them and what do cookies do?

Many people believe that cookies invade the privacy of the user by means of giving out personal information to web sites on the World Wide Web. Also, cookies can sometimes be used to collect information that can be sold or distributed for marketing purposes without a person's knowledge or express permission. Although, I was under the impression that this dodgy marketing strategy has been common practice long before the introduction of the Internet and the World Wide Web! A cookie is a small file used to store information about where you have been on the World Wide Web. When you visit a site, the site asks your browser to place one or more cookies on your hard disk. Later, when you return to the site, your browser sends the site the cookies that belong to it. Cookies help web sites keep track of information about you, such as the contents of your shopping cart, which in turn allows a web site to facilitate future transactions or requests. A cookie can only be read by the server in the domain that stored it and are typically set to expire after a predetermined amount of time. Personally, I don't mind legitimate cookies because it is easy enough to set cookie preferences in order to control how they are used, as well as how much information you are willing to disclose to web sites. Cookies personalize and streamline my World Wide Web experience by recognizing an acknowledging me when I return to a web site. It retains useful, relevant information such as an identification number, preferences or a password and this adds to the convenience of using the web as I don't need to enter this information repeatedly. In order to protect your privacy, just be careful about how much personal information you surrender, most of the time I use a false name (unless I am purchasing over a secure line) and I always use my web based email, not my private email, just to keep the marketers at bay. Cookies do not read your hard drive, nor do they send your life story to the Feds

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