



Cookies: The Good, The Bad And The Ugly

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What Are Cookies?

Cookies are like an identification card made up of small bits of information in the form of text that help computers interact with websites. Specifically, they allow websites to remember information, such as logins or items stored in an online shopping cart, and record an individual's browsing activity so advertisers can use it for targeted advertising. In this guide, you'll find out more about cookies and how to manage them effectively to protect your privacy.

Most of the information cookies save is related to people's browsing activity. This includes:

1. Previously-visited pages:

Cookies can (but do not always) record the pages you visited on a particular site. For example, cookies store the items you looked

at while shopping at Amazon or which destinations and hotels you explored on Booking.com.

2. Login data:

Cookies can store personal data, such as user names, addresses, language preferences, and payment info.

3. Statistical website tracking:

Cookies enable marketers to better understand how visitors found a website and how they interacted with it. Their goal is to improve the website by enhancing the user experience.



Are Cookies Good or Bad?

On the one hand, cookies can be useful. They make it possible for the websites you visit to provide a more convenient browsing experience. For example, they can keep you logged into websites as you browse from page to page and they record your preferences, such as your name and password details, for when you revisit. Without them, the functionality of some websites may deteriorate and by deleting cookies altogether, saved settings and logins are removed, along with the pages visited.

On the other hand, cookies can make you feel like you're being watched. They can track you from one site to another. So, if you browsed for a new phone on Amazon, other pages can access that cookie information and serve you specific ads for that device (or competing devices).



If you're interested in those "related links," good; if not, they can seem intrusive. Cookies can also affect device performance. Too many of them can slow down your computer.

Cookies aren't inherently bad, but they do collect and store personal data. For this reason, the EU has enforced laws mandating that websites inform people that data is being collected about them. Over time, you will accumulate hundreds or even thousands of cookies, and getting rid of them periodically is an important part of your overall privacy hygiene. You can also install a private browser such as [Avast Secure Browser](#) to mask your digital identity by eliminating ads, block third-party cookies and preventing phishing attacks.

