



The Technology Minute

What are cookies?

A cookie is simply a small file sent from a web site to your browser. When you visit the site again, the cookie can be retrieved and updated. Common uses include:

1. Remembering login information for you, to keep you from having to re-enter it later
2. Applying customized options based on your previously selected settings
3. Counting unique visitors to the website and/or keeping track of the last time you visited

Cookies are not programs that run on your computer, and they cannot contain viruses or other harmful software. They only store previously entered information for sites.

What are tracking cookies? Are they dangerous?

While tracking cookies sound malicious, and many anti-virus programs remove them, they are not much of a threat. They cannot steal files from your computer, or harm your computer in any way. They can, however, keep track of other sites you have visited which share the same type of advertisement code (the most common usage of tracking cookies). The primary reason for this is so that tailored ads to fit your location, or other criteria, can be shown across sites that use the same advertising networks. The simple rule is just be careful entering personal information on websites that you do not trust.

Can I disable cookies in my browser?

Yes! All web browsers allow you to completely disable cookies, but as a result, functionality may be limited on certain websites that rely on cookies to operate. Most web browsers let you choose what types of cookies you wish to allow, and can even block all cookies except those on sites you specifically allow. You can also occasionally clear your cookies, but you may lose saved login information for sites.

Adjusting your cookie settings in Internet Explorer:

From the menu, choose **Tools**, then **Internet Options**, and click on the **Privacy** tab.

Adjusting your cookie settings in Firefox:

From the menu, choose **Tools**, then **Options**, and click on the **Privacy** tab.

Once again, the best way to stay safe is to not enter personal information on sites that you do not trust!