

Cry for Help

Computer Tips & Tricks for the novice to the advanced.

Cookies Good or Bad ?

Often I get asked “what are cookies?” and “are they viruses or malware?”. In short they are not viruses, and are mostly harmless.

Cookies are created to improve your internet experience. They are small encrypted text files that are placed on your computer by a lot of web sites. They keep information about your login, mostly to save you having to re-enter it. They might know your preferences on a web site and remember your last activity. While they don't normally contain personal details about you, they may. Information is specific to your computer and user login.

But yes, they can also be bad. Specifically, if you go to an unscrupulous web site and key in your personal details, then the cookie has access to this information. So this is why you must be very careful which sites you visit and who you give your details to.

In your browser settings (eg Internet Explorer + Options) you can adjust the privacy settings that will determine how strict you want to be with cookies, and block some types of cookies being put onto your computer. You can alternatively set your browser to “Allow” or “Block” individual web sites. But be careful – some web sites actually require the use of cookies to run and hence may stop working.

The bottom line is; be careful, not paranoid, and the default settings that come with the computer suit most people.

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