

WWC Tech Talk – Cookies, Cache, & History

November 13, 2018

COOKIES

What are Cookies?

Cookies are small files that are created by a web server when you visit a web page. These small files contain bits of information about your connection, and are sent from the website you have visited to your computer, tablet, or mobile device. Some cookies will have an expiration date or time. Some cookies live forever.

Why are they called Cookies?

Some folks believe cookies are named after the crumbs dropped by Hansel and Gretel to help them find their way home. In the mid-1990s, a developer at Netscape was designing a way to monitor an active connection between a person and a site where items were for sale. It created a way to be sure the items being purchased were associated with the buyer. The first cookies were called Magic Cookies. Like a fortune cookie, they contained a small amount of data.

Are Cookies bad? For the most part, Cookies are NOT bad. They are helpful when making online purchases or connecting to a secure site like a bank. The connection gets a special number/ID which identifies the connection. When working with a secure site, the cookie may contain more identifying information like a login ID. Cookies can be stored by a third-party website and these cookies are used to track a user's surfing history.

How do I get Cookies? Nearly every time you use a web browser to connect to a web page, the web page creates and will transfer a cookie to your computer to be stored on your computer.

What kinds of Cookies are there?

Here are a few you will likely run into:

- **session cookies** – used only while a person is on a website. The data is erased when the browser is closed or the session
- **persistent cookies** – also called **tracking cookies**. used to collect info about your behavior on a particular website over a period of time.
- **secure cookies** – can only be used for secure connections, e.g. a bank connection. The cookie is encrypted. These cookies often contain userID information.
- **third-party cookies** – these are also tracking cookies.

CACHE

What is cache? Browser cache contains copies of files, website images, website data, and documents that are viewed on a webpage. These cache files are stored on your computer, mobile phone or tablet. Each time you visit the page again, the web browser will retrieve the local cached copy first for viewing which makes it seem like the internet is really fast.

If it makes it faster to get to a webpage, why do I want to clear my cache? You want to clear out outdated copies of web pages so you can get the most current version of a web page. Example: When Janis makes a change to the Woodcroft Woman's webpage, when she goes to look at her changes, they may not show up. This is because her web browser is actually showing the local 'cached' copy, not the current copy. After clearing out the local copy, the next time she looks at the webpage, the browser sees that there are no local copies and goes out to get the most current version. By doing this, there will now be a new cached copy.

HISTORY:

What is the purpose of browsing history? Each browser maintains a list of webpages that have been visited to make it easy to return to a previous page or pages using the Back button. History information is stored on your computer. This can be a problem if you share your computer with someone else or if you use a public computer. This history is saved on the computer and another user could access your browsing history, including accessing sites where you may have saved your password. For this reason, it's a good idea to clear your history regularly, and to always clear it when you use a public computer or a shared computer.

MAKE IT DISAPPEAR! Clearing cookies, cache, & history

To protect your privacy, it is a good idea to clear your cookies, cache, and history when you have finished using a web browser. Following are some ways to clear these local internet files. When selecting items to clear, make sure to check Cookies, Cache, Form Data, History, and other similar boxes. Some web browsers let you set this default behavior automatically when you close the web browser.

How to clear your cache and cookies:

<https://faq.its.fsu.edu/support-services/cache-and-cookies>
<https://www.whatismybrowser.com/guides/how-to-clear-cookies-browsing-history-and-cache/>
<https://kb.wisc.edu/helpdesk/page.php?id=36150>

Safari

iphone,ipad,ipod - <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT201265>
Safari on computer - <https://support.apple.com/guide/safari/clear-your-browsing-history-sfri47acf5d6/mac>

Firefox

Cache & Cookies- <https://support.mozilla.org/en-US/kb/how-clear-firefox-cache>

History - <https://support.mozilla.org/en-US/kb/delete-browsing-search-download-history-firefox>

GLOSSARY:

- Cache – copies of images, documents, and data from a web page that are stored on your computer
- Cookie – small files stored on your computer that contain identifying information
- History – what web pages have been visited.
- URL - Uniform Record Locator. A standard way to identify a specific web page.
- Web Browser – the application used on your computer, laptop, or mobile device to explore the internet. Some examples of commonly used browsers are Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Safari, and Edge.

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Some fun internet terms

<https://www.inlife.co.uk/2015/07/why-are-cookies-called-cookies/>

Referenced Webpages:

<http://www.purevpn.com/blog/all-about-internet-cookies-scty/>

<http://www.whatarecookies.com/>

<https://www.reference.com/technology/computer-cookies-called-cookies-f0e2d0e3a1d78f14>

<http://www.whatarecookies.com/view.asp>

An example of a website's privacy policy and how they use cookies:

<https://www.inlife.co.uk/privacy-policy/>