

Objective 9

Understanding and Managing Internet Tracking Programs

**GETTING
STARTED**
— WITH —
TECHNOLOGY



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

How cookies track browsing history

As someone browses the internet, they leave a digital record of the sites they visited, or links that were clicked. Those tiny pieces of data are called cookies. A cookie is essentially a small bit of data that is stored by a website when it's visited. Cookie data by itself doesn't pose a serious risk to someone's online security. It is still important to understand how that data is tracked and/or used.

Some sites use an individual's user account to quickly personalize the browsing experience. This allows automation to populate information like names, settings, or location. In some instances, these settings can be toggled on or off. An individual can also typically clear their browser history to remove existing cookies.

Cookies can help the website pull information so the user doesn't have to retype or enter data. This can provide a quicker browsing experience while providing a level of convenience.

However, the data collected can also potentially be used to track browsing and shopping habits. Companies want to know a user's preferences to target market them with items, sites or social media that are the most likely to get a click or purchase.

If you have ever added an item to a virtual shopping cart, then gotten an email that encourages you to complete the purchase, this was done with cookies.

HOW THIS HELPS YOU

It is important to understand how sites use the information that's collected. It's also important to know that most cookies don't bring an inherent risk of malware or breaching financial data.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Should I be worried about cookies?

Cookies don't typically cause much danger to an individual's digital security.

Account tracking

When you create an online account, many websites request permission to save and track your activities online. These sites are given permission to monitor activity and store that data themselves. Concern is risen when these companies take that data and sell it to a 3rd party. Check to see if you can turn off this feature.

Common examples of companies tracking data: video, shopping, browsing

When viewing a website or watching an online video, an advertisement will show up that appears to be tailored made for you. Although some might not realize it is happening, many of our most visited websites track tendencies and use that information to target their marketing efforts.

BEST PRACTICES

How to avoid/reduce cookie tracking

- **Websites offer a choice:** When visiting some sites, the user will be given the option to accept cookies or not.
- **Disable on a browser:** Some web browsers like Google Chrome have privacy settings that can be adjusted depending on your comfort and security needs.
- **Go incognito:** Web browsers should offer private browsers that are able to greatly reduce the amount of Internet traffic that is tracked.

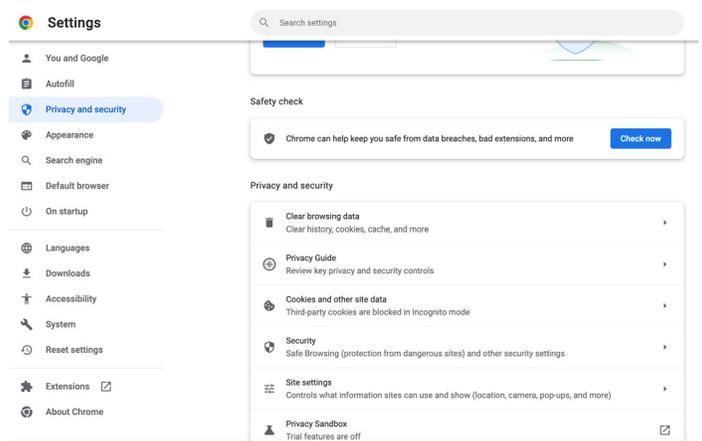
When should you NOT accept cookies?

- **Third party cookies:** Some sites look to gather data on individuals and then sell it to a 3rd party organization. If you are visiting a site that refers to tracking by 3rd parties, it may take your information and share it with a company that wishes to use it without your consent.
- **Antivirus warning:** If there is an antivirus software installed on your device (which is encouraged), it likely can indicate cookies that should be declined. If you've visited a site that falls into this category, clearing browser and cookie history can probably resolve any complications.
- **Computer moving slow:** Cookies store data on your device, which can cause slow functionality. Clearing old browser data can bring your device's speed back by freeing up space.

- **Websites that aren't encrypted:** When browsing online, an encrypted website will have a lock icon next to the site's address. If the site does not show a visible lock, there is no real security to protect your information sent and received online.
- **Using private information:** If you are using a site and you'll be sending or receiving personal data (financial, social security number) you should decline cookies if you are asked.

ACTION ITEMS

What accounts do you have that might be tracking your online activities? Write them down and be sure to check the privacy and cookie settings and adjust them to your comfort level.



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It is likely that at some point you will want to clear your browsing history. This can free up disk space on your device which will probably increase the performance slightly, as well as removing your data from websites that collected information through cookies and similar tracking. AT&T has provided these guidelines for clearing browser history for mobile devices and laptops.

Clearing Browser History on Mobile

Safari on an iOS mobile device:

- Go to Settings.
- Find and select Safari.
- Select Clear History and Website Data. You should get a pop-up that confirming your selection.
- Select Clear. The Clear History and Website Data button will turn gray.

Chrome on an iOS mobile device:

- Open your browser.
- Select the 3-dot menu at the bottom of the screen.
- Select Settings, then Privacy.
- Select Clear Browsing Data.
- Choose Browsing History, Cookies and Site Data, or Cached Images and Files.
- Select Clear Browsing Data. You'll see a pop-up that lets you confirm your selection.

Chrome on an Android device:

- Open your browser.
- Select the 3-dot menu.
- Select History, then Clear browsing data.
- Choose a deletion time range or the specific items you want to delete.
- Select Clear data, then Clear.

Clearing Browser History on Computer

Chrome on a PC:

- Open your browser.
- Press Ctrl+Shift+Delete.
- Select the items you want to clear.
- Select the Delete, OK, Clear, or Clear data button, depending on your browser type.
- Close and reopen your browser.

Chrome on a Mac:

- Open your browser.
- Press Command+Shift+Delete.
- Select the items you want to clear.
- Select the Delete or Clear button, depending on your browser type.
- Close and reopen your browser.

Safari on a Mac:

- Open your browser.
- Select Safari in the top left corner next to the Apple icon.
- Select Preferences, then Privacy, then Manage Website Data.
- Select the items you want to clear.
- Select the Remove or Remove All button, depending on your choices.
- Close and reopen your browser.