

## **ALL ABOUT COOKIES**

### **WHAT IS A COOKIE?**

A Cookie is a simple text file containing name value pairs, such as a User ID and a number for identification. This text file, along with the data in it, originates from the web site. The data is not taken from the user's computer.

The program that uses the information stored in a Cookie is also run from the web site, not the user's computer

### **WHY USE COOKIES?**

Cookies make web sites easier to use. For example, you wouldn't be able to change the colours, components and layout of a web site if it weren't for Cookies.

It is Cookies that prevent registered Web Assets users from passing on their passwords and making multiple logins.

Cookies give the owners of web sites detailed and accurate information on how a visitor uses their site.

Cookies keep track of people's purchases in shopping cart applications.

### **WHY ALL THE FUSS ABOUT COOKIES?**

There has been some confusion about Cookies, particularly with regard to privacy issues.

Cookies have been identified by some people as a security risk, but not because they are able to take information from your computer. Rather because information gathered on site A about a person's purchases, or areas of interest may then be provided, or sold to site B, often for the purpose of offering you complimentary or similar products when you next visit site B. These Cookies are called third party Cookies; sometimes called Spy Cookies.

Some people see this cross fertilisation of information across web sites or businesses as an invasion of privacy.

Cookies from Banner Ads that are distributed by a single company over a number of web sites are often targeted as threats to privacy. This does seem to be a fair criticism as many people don't pay attention to ads on web sites any more, and although a user may feel that they need to keep track of the information that they give a web site, they don't feel they should have to keep track of ads they may see as they surf the net.

Much of the fuss concerning Cookies is that they operate automatically without any input from the user and seem to be doing things without the user's permission. This concerns some people much more than others.

It is important to recognise the trade off between privacy and convenience. For example you may really appreciate automatically getting a window seat and vegetarian meal when you travel with your preferred airline, but to get that level of service you have entrusted the airline with a significant amount of personal information.

If you use Cookies on your site, ensure that you let your visitors know how you use the information that they collect. This will give your users a degree of comfort. Please feel free to reference Web Assets Resource [Example Privacy Policy](#).