

About cookies

Nearly every website you visit will use cookies in some way to improve your user experience by enabling that website to 'remember' you, either for the duration of your visit (using a 'session cookie') or for repeat visits (using a 'persistent cookie').

Cookies do a lot of different jobs, like helping you navigate between pages efficiently, storing your preferences, and generally improving your experience. Cookies can make the interaction between you and the website faster and easier. If a website doesn't use cookies, it will think you are a new visitor every time you move to a new page on the site – for example, when you enter your login details and move to another page it won't recognise you and it won't be able to keep you logged in.

Some websites will also use cookies to enable them to target their advertising or marketing messages based for example, on your location and/or browsing habits. Cookies may be set by the website you are visiting ('first party cookies') or they may be set by other websites who run content on the page you are viewing ('third party cookies').

What is in a cookie?

A cookie is not a type of biscuit, it is a simple text file that is stored on your computer or mobile device by a website's server and only that server will be able to retrieve or read the contents of that cookie. Each cookie is unique to your web browser. It will contain some anonymous information such as a unique identifier and the site name and some digits and numbers. It allows a website to remember things like your preferences or what's in your shopping basket.

What to do if you don't want cookies to be set

A few people find the idea of a website storing information a bit intrusive, particularly when this information is stored and used by a third party without them knowing. Although this is generally quite harmless you may not, for example, want to see advertising that has been targeted to your interests. If you prefer, it is possible to block some or all cookies, or even to delete cookies that have already been set; but you need to be aware that you might lose some functions of that website.

Opting out of cookies

If you have decided you do not want to receive cookies, then you can change your browser so that it notifies you when cookies are sent to it or you can refuse cookies altogether. You can also delete cookies that have already been set.

If you wish to restrict or block web browser cookies which are set on your device then you can do this through your browser settings; normally the Help function within your browser should tell you how. You may also wish to visit www.aboutcookies.org, which contains information on how to do this on a wide variety of desktop browsers.