

Hillingdon u3a

What are Cookies

August 2026



History of the Cookie

The HTTP Cookie was invented in 1994 by Lou Montulli, a Netscape developer.

HTTP protocol doesn't remember previous requests, so he developed what became known as the Cookie, to store information between page visits.

The term came from the Unix name for a data packet that is sent and received unchanged. This is called a “**magic cookie**”,



What is a Cookie

A cookie is a message given to a Web browser by a Web server.

The browser stores the message as a text file.

The message is then sent back to the server each time the browser requests a page from the server.



What is a Cookie

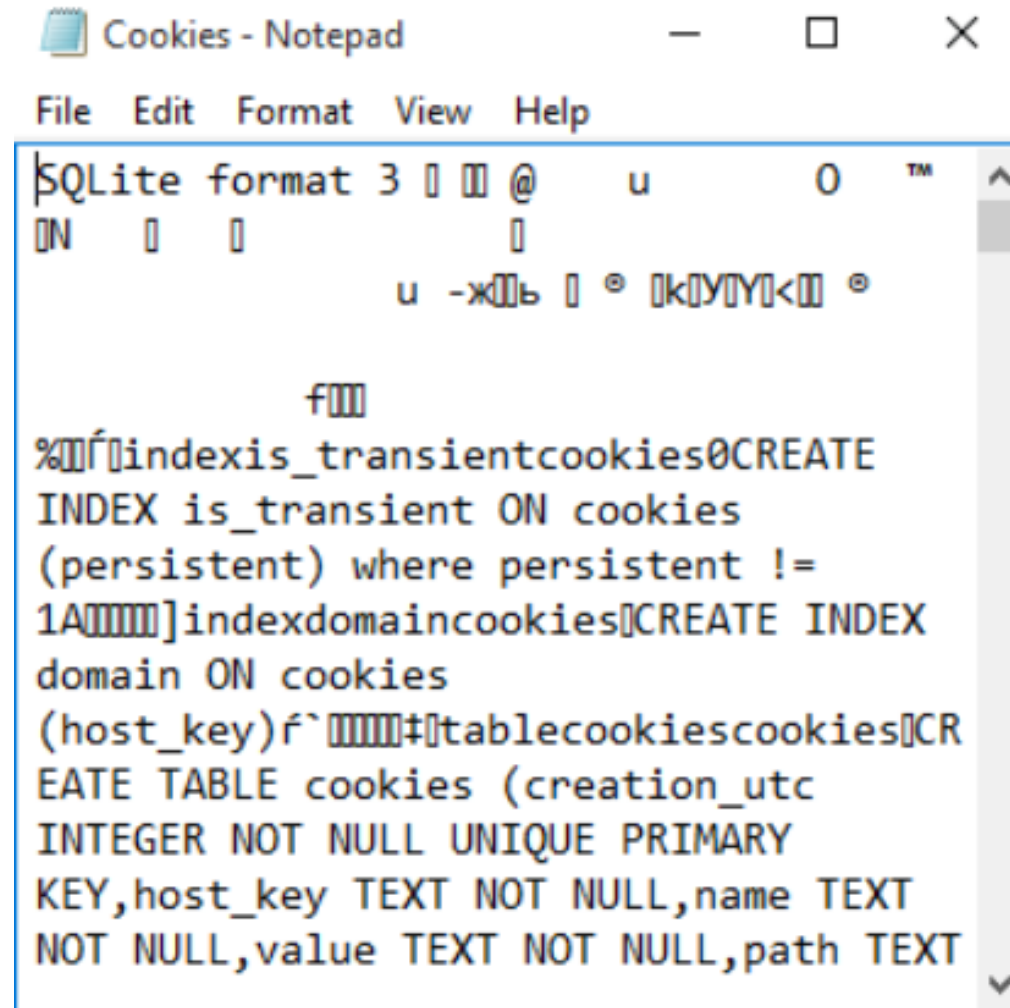
Most cookies are harmless and quite small, typically ranging from 50 bytes to 4 kilobytes in size.

They can't run programs, deliver viruses, or access other files on your computer. They are simply text files with data strings.



What is a Cookie

The text message might look like.....



```
SQLite format 3
CREATE INDEX is_transient ON cookies
(persistent) where persistent !=
1
CREATE INDEX domain ON cookies
(host_key)
CREATE TABLE cookies (creation_utc
INTEGER NOT NULL UNIQUE PRIMARY
KEY, host_key TEXT NOT NULL, name TEXT
NOT NULL, value TEXT NOT NULL, path TEXT
```



Where are my Cookies

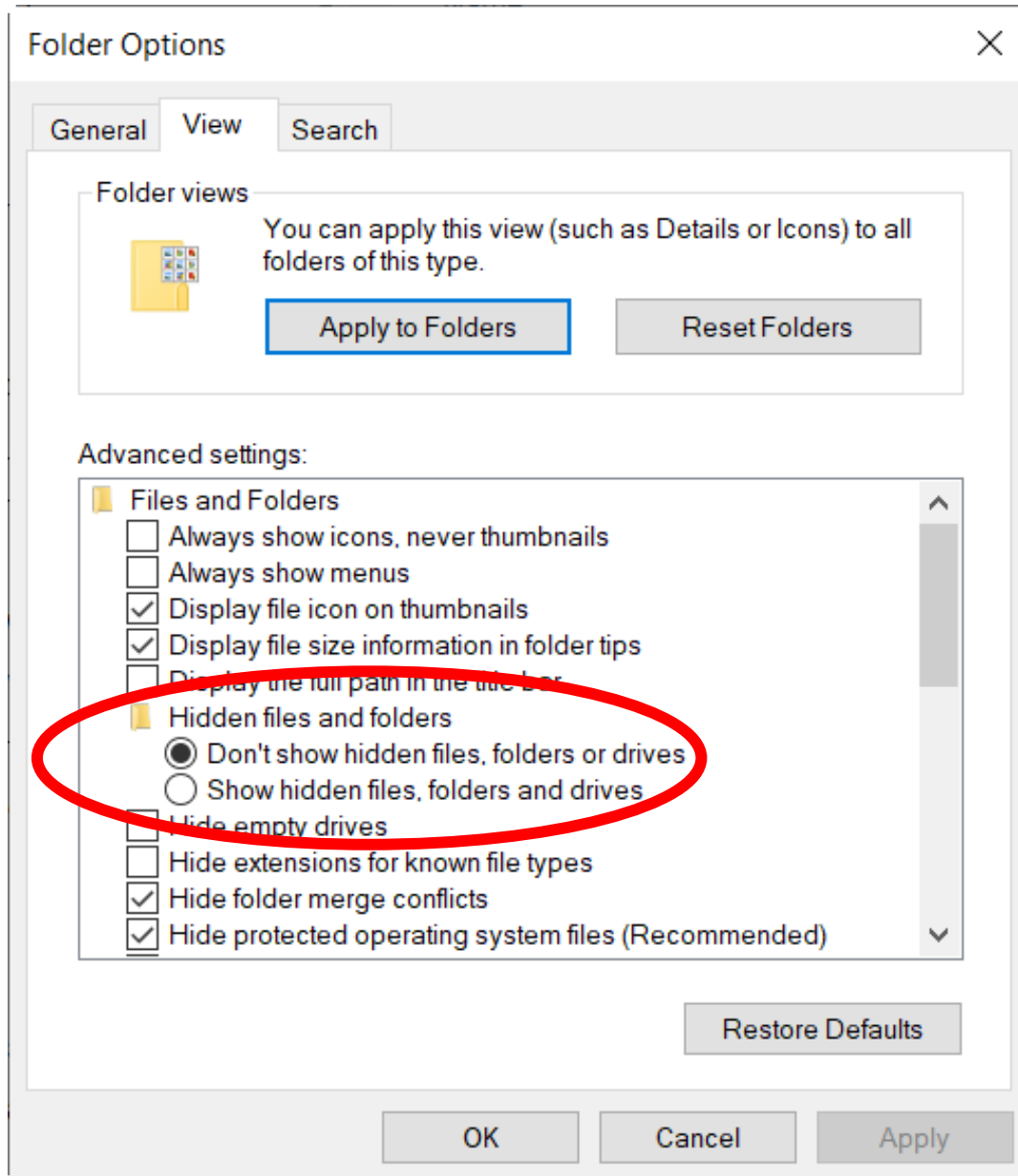
These files are stored on your PC in a hidden folder.

To find these files you need to unhide the system folders that are hidden by default.

Go the File Explorer>View>Options>View



Hidden Folder Options



Toggle **Show hidden files, folders, and drives** on, then click **Apply**.

Don't forget to swap it back once you have had a look around. There are so many system folders to confuse you.



Hidden Folder Options

Cookies are part of the browser process

Cookie files are saved to the user profiles location in the C:/ drive

Chrome

\Users\YourUserName\AppData\Local\Google\Chrome\User Data\Default

Firefox

C:\Users\YourUserName\AppData\Roaming\Mozilla\Firefox\Profiles

Edge

\Users\your username\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Edge\User Data\Default



Firefox is best accessed via the browser >Settings>Help > more
troubleshooting information

What are Cookies for

Cookies serve useful and sometimes an essential function. A Cookie is created by web server and then held on your device – good for privacy & security.

It tracks your path through a site to record pages you viewed, selections you've made or items you purchased. It holds data on past visits so the webpage can present you with for example, view preferences and of course ad banners targeted at you.

Also collects personal information you enter to retain and auto-fill into Web pages that need it.



Why Do Websites use a cookie

Imagine you're on your favourite online music store.....

- You find your band has some new music and listen to some sample tracks
- Now, you may have viewed 2 Web pages
- Each time you view a different page, the server sees it as a new visit
- Cookies allow the music site's server to identify you so it can link all your request and not mix the data with the

thousands of people visiting the same online site
Cookies also enable the server to keep track of
your activity and compile a list of your purchases



Why Do Websites use a cookie

The cookie message can include a:

- customer number
- shopping cart number
- part number
- other data
- expiration date
- domain name of the host that created the cookie
- then a server that creates a cookie can request it the next time you connect to one its Web pages



Session Cookies vs. Persistent Cookies & others

Session cookies are temporary. They disappear when you close your browser.

Session cookies are essential for basic website functionality, like keeping you logged in while you navigate between pages.



Session Cookies vs. Persistent Cookies & others

Persistent cookies, on the other hand, remain on your device for a set period, sometimes months or even years. This is how websites remember your preferences.

For example, some websites use persistent cookies to remember visitors' accessibility preferences.



Session Cookies vs. Persistent Cookies & others

Secure cookie, can only be transmitted over a HTTPS connection. It cannot be transmitted over a HTTP connection. Unlikely to be exposed to theft via eavesdropping.

HTTP-only Cookie, cannot be accessed by client API's

Same Site Cookie, created in 2016 to stop cross-site attacks.

Requires the target domain to be the same as the origin domain.



First-Party vs. Third-Party Cookies

First-party cookies come directly from the website you're visiting. Generally speaking, these cookies enhance your user experience, so they are sort of necessary.

Third-party cookies are placed by external domains. These cookies usually come from advertisers and analytics companies.

If you visit a website with ads, for example, the advertiser stores cookies so they can track your browsing activity and use the data for ad targeting.



Cookie Types

Essential: necessary for websites to function. Without them, you wouldn't be able to log in or complete purchases.

Functional: enhancing, remembers your language or font size selections. Important, but not necessary.

Advertising and tracking: tracks your behavior to personalize ads and record analytics data about website traffic.



Serious about privacy, turn on only **Essential** cookies. GDP classifies cookies as personal data which now heavily regulates websites & requires them to inform users what and how cookies are stored. And Opt out

Should I Manage Cookies ?

YES.....

Privacy - Remove the data trail. Disrupt building a profile of you

Improve Browser Performance – can slow down the Browser

Fixing Website Errors- Corrupte or outdated cause problems

Security after using Shared Computers – Clear after use.

Especially if banking, Email or social media accounts used as cookies are used to you logged in.



How to clear Cookies

Depends on the Browser but look in the Privacy section.

Google Chrome

Click on the 3 dots & select “Settings”

>Navigate to “Privacy and Security”

>Click “Clear Browsing Data”

>Choose “Cookies and other site data” and then select “All” or a time range.

>Click “Clear data” to complete action



How to clear Cookies

Mozilla Firefox

Click on the 3 horizontal lines (top right) & select “Settings”

>Choose “Privacy and Security”

>Click “Cookies and Site Data” and then

>Click on “Clear” to remove all cookies or

>Click “Manage Data” to select specific websites



How to clear Cookies

Microsoft Edge

Click on the 3 dots (top right) & select “Settings”

>Choose “Privacy, search and services”

>Then under “Clear browsing data”

>Select “Choose what to clear”

>Select “Cookies and other site data” and pick a time range

>Click “Clear now” to complete the action.



How to clear Cookies

Safari (macOS & iOS)

Select Safari from the top menu & select “Preferences”

>Navigate to the “Privacy tab”

>Click on “Manage Website Data”

>Choose either “Remove All” to delete everything

>Or search for specific websites and remove their data individually.



You can also clear cookies on iPhones

>Settings>Safari>Clear History and Website Data

How to clear Cookies

The End

