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NEWSLETTER

WHAT ARE COOKIES?

What are cookies?

Fresh-baked cookies are yummy, but you may not have the same positive associations with cookies on your computer. Here's what you need to know about cookies and what they mean for your internet browsing.

Cookies have been around for a long time, but new laws now require websites to ask for your permission to use them. You've likely noticed more sites informing you that "this website uses cookies," and they'll ask you to click to accept the use of cookies. But what exactly are you agreeing to?

A website cookie is a small piece of text the website you are visiting stores on your computer. Cookies are equivalent to your ticket to get onto the website. Website owners track your individualized code to gather information.

Cookies tell the website that the user has been to the site before. The website can recall personal login information and other preferences. A shopping site will remember your cart and let you continue shopping, or suggest other goods you might like.

Viewing and Controlling Cookies

So, why are sites asking for permission to store their cookies on your computer? Users are more concerned now about the digital footprint they are leaving on the Web: they want to protect their Web history.

Let's be clear. When you accept a cookie, you are not allowing access to your computer or any of your personal data, unless you have knowingly provided it as you do when online shopping, that is.

Also, it's not possible to execute code from a cookie. That means a bad actor can't use a cookie to deliver a virus or malware. Overall, cookies on their own are safe. Agreeing to first-party cookies from the website simplifies session management, personalization, and tracking.

The danger comes from third-party cookies generated by advertisers or analytics companies. Say, for instance, you surf to a webpage that has 10 ads on it. You don't even have to click on any of those ads to generate 10 cookies. These cookies track your browsing history across the Web on any site carrying their ads. That's why people are becoming more wary of the privacy implications.

That's the Way the Cookie Crumbles

Users can make their own cookie choices. Those who allow cookies will enjoy a more streamlined Web surfing experience. Those who don't want cookies tracking their browsing history will opt out. Without cookies these users have to re-enter their data every time they visit a website.

Often you can control your cookies in your browser settings. In Google Chrome, for example, you'd select "Settings" from the menu drop down in the upper-right corner, then "show advanced settings" and then "content settings." In the Cookies section you might choose "Keep local data only until you quit your browser" and "block third-party cookies and site data."

If you're really annoyed by the pop-ups asking you about cookie use, you can install a browser add-on, too.

The "Incognito" mode on your browser can be used to save cookies for the current session, but when you close the browser the cookies will be deleted.

We can help you minimize the extent to which you are being tracked on the internet. Contact our IT experts today at 940-282-0290. If you want to serve actual cookies if we visit you at home to do the work, we won't complain.

6 Reasons to Replace Your ISP Email

When you sign up for an internet service, the provider will hook you up with an email address, too. Your internet service provider (ISP) wants to keep you connected to them. But this convenient email address isn't always the best long-term solution for you.

That "yourname@ispprovider.com" email address may work fine. You use it to keep in touch with your family and friends, you get bills to that address, and you've used it to login to your social media and online news and shopping sites.

But relying on your ISP for your email address may not be the best strategy for you. Here are some drawbacks to consider.

#1 If you rely on your @isprovider.com address, you could end up locked in with poor service or high prices. You feel stuck because you can't take your email address with you if you want to switch providers.

#2 Internet service providers are not in the email business, whereas email providers such as Gmail and Outlook are always working to improve. Your ISP may not have updated its email offerings for a decade.

#3 Most ISPs have very limited storage space for email, which can make your service less reliable and convenient.

#4 Also, ISPs don't make the same effort to keep your email secure and your inbox spam free. A provider more

focused on email services offers more sophisticated filtering. ISP emails usually have primitive spam filtering that is easy to bypass.

#5 With an ISP email, your email is often accessible only on the provider's mail servers, and you need to be able to access those servers to get to your emails. A cloud-based email provider lets you access your inbox via a Web browser. So, it doesn't matter where in the world you are; you can still get access.

#6 You might be supporting a local ISP with your business. If that smaller provider goes belly up, however, your email address is gone forever, too.

Making the switch to an email provider

You may feel compelled to remain loyal to your ISP because changing your email address is a headache. Yet migrating to a Web-based email provider on your terms will help.

You'll have a smoother transition if your ISP allows you to download your current address book.

Fortunately, once you make the switch to a Web/cloud-based email provider, you can move ISPs without it making any difference to your email communications.

You could even pay a small fee to upgrade your email with a custom domain name. Maybe you've always wanted to have your email come from @yourlastname.com, because it looks cool. Or, if you have a home business, you could have your email come from @yourbusiness.com. This looks more professional, and you can move the address to any provider, as the domain remains the same.

Whether you're using an ISP or Web/cloud-based email provider, it's also a good idea to back up your emails. By downloading and backing up your email, you gain more control and peace of mind.

We can help you find the right email provider or ISP for your needs. We'll help you migrate your email, and we can set up a backup too. Let us help you, call us now at 940-282-0290.