

What are cookies?

A cookie is a small file of letters and numbers that is downloaded on to your computer when you visit a website. Cookies are used by many websites and can do a number of things eg remembering your preferences, recording what you have put in your shopping basket, and counting the number of people looking at a website. The rules on cookies are covered by the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations. The Regulations also cover similar technologies for storing information, eg Flash cookies. The Regulations were revised in 2011, and the ICO is responsible for enforcing these new rules. Useful information includes;

- A number of websites provide detailed information on cookies, including AllAboutCookies.org and [AllAbout Cookies.org.uk](http://AllAboutCookies.org.uk).
- The Internet Advertising Bureau website [Your Online Choices](http://YourOnlineChoices.org) allows you to install opt-out cookies across different advertising networks.
- Google has developed a browser add-on to allow users to opt-out of Google Analytics across all websites which use this popular analytics product.
- New technologies such as Mozilla's Do Not Track allow you to tell websites not to track you.
- Internet Explorer has a feature called Tracking Protection Lists which allows you to import a list of websites you want to block.

What do the new rules mean?

The rules require in most cases that websites wanting to use cookies get your consent.

How will these new rules impact on me when I use the internet?

As organisations start to comply with these rules you are likely to start to see more information about cookies on sites and be given more choices about these cookies. This might include, for example, being asked to agree to a cookie being used for a particular service, such as remembering your preferences on a site.

Organisations will need to decide on the best way to provide clear information about cookies and to give people using their websites the right choices. They will also want to make sure that these changes do not adversely affect the experience of people using the internet. This should ensure they find a solution which meets the requirements in a way that works well for their site and meets the needs of people using it.

How can I control my cookies?

You can use your web browser (e.g. Internet Explorer) to:

- Delete all cookies
- Block all cookies allow all cookies
- Block third-party cookies
- Clear all cookies when you close the browser
- Open a 'private browsing' session
- Install add-ons and plug-ins to extend browser functionality

Where to find information about controlling cookies?

Click on the links below to find out about each specific browser and it's information on cookies.

- Internet Explorer
- Google Chrome
- Firefox
- Safari
- Opera