

The Swedish Post and Telecom Agency monitors the event development linked to the corona virus (covid-19)

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Questions and answers about cookies for you who use the internet

Many websites create small files with information about your visit and store them in your browser. When your browser contacts the same web server again, it sends back a copy of the files. Thanks to this, web pages can be adapted to what you have done in the past.

These small files are called cookies or cookies. As a general rule, consent is required to use cookies.

You can, by setting up your browser, decide whether or not you want cookies at all. You can also choose to ask your computer every time a cookie is about to be stored on your computer.

▼ What is a cookie?

A cookie (or cookie) is a small text file that a website requests to save on the visitor's computer, tablet or mobile phone. Many websites use cookies to give visitors access to various features. The information in the cookie can also be used to track the user's browsing on websites that use the same cookie.

Ordinary cookies can be divided into two main types. One type saves a file on your computer for an extended period of time, so the cookie has an expiration date. For example, it is used for features that tell you what's new since you visited the current site last time. Once the expiration date has passed, the cookie will be deleted from your computer and created again the next time you visit the site.

The second type is called session cookies and has no expiration date. When you are browsing a page, this cookie is temporarily stored on your computer to keep track of, for example, which language you have chosen. Session cookies are not stored for a long time on the computer, but disappear when you close the browser.

In addition to ordinary cookies, there are a number of similar technical solutions that are affected by the same legislation.

▼ What are third-party cookies?

Cookies that are used, for example, to gather information for advertising and tailor-made content as well as for web statistics can be so-called third-party cookies. This type of cookie comes from someone other than the person responsible for the site eg. an advertising company.

An ad company can place ads or statistics services that map users' browsing habits to different websites. Your browsing habits can therefore potentially be mapped on all websites that use the same advertising or statistics service.

Because third-party cookies enable more comprehensive mapping of the user's browsing habits, they are considered more sensitive from an integrity perspective. Therefore, in most browsers, it is possible to set so that third-party cookies are not accepted, while other types of cookies are allowed.

▼ What are cookies used for?

Here are some examples of what cookies can be used for:

- Cookies are often used for logging on to websites. When you as a user log in to a website, a cookie is placed on your computer. Each time you go to a new page, your computer sends the cookie to the website you are visiting. With the help of the cookie, the site can confirm that you are logged in and you do not have to use the username and password for each new page.
- On websites that sell goods, cookies are used to make it easy to shop. With the help of cookies, the website can keep track of what products you have "put in your shopping cart".
- With the help of cookies, websites can register which users have visited which pages. The information can then be used to tailor advertising and other customized content to you as a user. Many cookies used for these purposes are so-called third-party cookies.
- Cookies can be used when you want to customize websites according to your user preferences. This may include designing requests on a site that you frequently visit, about custom contrast or font size for ergonomic reasons, or about custom sorting or selection.
- Cookies can also be used to keep track of who is voting in a poll to avoid a user voting multiple times.
- Most websites track traffic through web statistics to improve the site, motivate costs and learn more about their target groups. Many cookies used for web statistics are third-party cookies.

▼ What are the risks associated with cookies?

Cookies are small text fragments that are inherently harmless when compared to, for example, viruses. They do not affect your computer or mobile phone. But there are still some risks, especially in the following three areas:

- Cookies allow websites to, under certain conditions, map your activities online, which can be perceived as an intrusion on personal privacy.
- The eavesdropping and counterfeiting of cookies can be used for criminal purposes. The tools can be used for, for example, unauthorized login, unauthorized modification of content in a shopping basket, distortion of statistics and unauthorized voting. It is important that you try to protect yourself against these risks by protecting sensitive communications with encryption and using strong passwords. For more information on how to protect yourself on the internet visit Your Security (<https://www.dinsakerhet.se>) .
- A Flash presentation (for example, a Youtube video) hosted on one site may have been downloaded from another site. The owner of the Flash presentation can then record visits to all pages that have posted the video on their websites and link this information. This can happen even if you as a user have blocked the use of cookies in your browser.

▼ How can I know which cookies I have on my computer?

Browsers normally save all common cookies in a particular directory on your computer's hard drive. One way to find out which cookies are stored on your computer is to look right at that directory and examine the contents. Note that session cookies do not need to be stored on your hard disk, so you cannot be sure to find them using this method. In addition, it is not always clear which cookie comes from which website.

▼ How can I prevent cookies from being stored on my computer?

Most browsers can be configured to completely block the use of cookies.

You can also choose to set your browser so that you can actively accept each time a site sends a new cookie to your computer.

If your browser offers this option, you can set a rule that means you can surf with as few restrictions as possible, but still minimize the risks that cookies entail. For example, you may choose to block third-party cookies from making it more difficult for those who attempt to map your activity to the web to map your activity to more than one website.

Some browsers allow you to register the websites you frequently visit as trusted sites, which means that cookies from these sites are always accepted. For other websites, you as a user can choose to manually decide on each new cookie or to block cookies completely.

You can easily turn cookies off completely or partially, but it can have some consequences. For example, the sites that require login may be impossible to use and in some cases it may be impossible for you to order goods from an e-commerce site.

▼ What does the law on cookies say?

The use of cookies is regulated in several laws, including the Electronic Communications Act (LEK) over which PTS is the supervisory authority. According to LEK, anyone who visits a website with cookies should be informed that the site contains cookies and how and why they

are used. The visitor must also give his consent to the use of cookies in this way before they are stored or retrieved.

Cookies are also regulated by the Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), over which the Data Inspectorate is the supervisory authority. More information about the Data Protection Regulation can be found on the [Swedish Data Inspectorate's website \(https://www.datainspektionen.se/\)](https://www.datainspektionen.se/).

▼ What is the purpose of the cookie provision?

The purpose of the provision is to protect you as a user and your personal privacy. Cookies are used on many websites to give you access to various features. The information in the cookie is also possible to use to track your browsing, especially if it is about third party cookies that appear on many websites. Cookies can therefore also be used to compile and analyze the information you leave behind when you browse the web.

▼ The responsible person may not save cookies in the user's computer without the user's knowledge, but may a page be saved in the user's computer without providing information?

Yes, the technical feature that means that parts of a web page are stored in a cache are exempt from the provision. Cache is a storage that is needed to facilitate the transmission of an electronic message through an electronic communications network.

▼ How does PTS act if I register a website?

PTS receives all notifications of supervision that come into the authority. The public's views are important as part of our surveillance of the world.

PTS independently determines whether supervision should be initiated, and the authority has no obligation to act on individual notifications.

Guide for website owners

PTS is currently looking for guidance on website cookies for website owners.

Contact

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