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Let’s talk about cookies

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NO, NOT CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES -- I’M TALKING ABOUT BROWSER COOKIES: Browser cookies are good, they make life easier and don't take up much space.

First, let’s start with what cookies are. Cookies are simple text files that are created when you open a website. They help users navigate websites and perform certain functions. Cookies are used when you tell a website to “remember me,” or when you log onto a message board, play online games, and a bunch of other things. A cookie allows you to log onto a website without having to enter your email and password every time. They can only be read by the site that creates it.

The main purpose of a cookie is to identify users and possibly prepare customized Web pages or to save site login information for you.

They make surfing the web more seamless, and help websites operate more profitably and with greater efficiency. They record which pages you viewed, and how long the visitor stays and can help you return to a place you visited.

Cookies may store street addresses, city and zips, passwords, credit card numbers, etc. which allows you to enter those with a single click and are used by web servers to know whether the user is logged in or not, and to which account they are logged in, like your bank or stock broker.

Cookies were designed to be a reliable mechanism for websites to remember information, such as items in a shopping cart or to record the user's browsing activity (including clicking particular buttons, logging in, or recording which pages were visited by the user as far back as months or years ago). Cookies are designed to save you time and trouble. The chocolate chip kind are also rather tasty!

There is a theory that the name for browser cookies came from the Chinese fortune cookie which usually contains a chunk of text, but there are arguments against that.