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04 Task Performance 1

Chosen Tool: **DuckDuckGo (Search Engine)**

Producer's Explanation

DuckDuckGo explains on its official site that it does not track users' searches or browsing history. The company states that its browser and extension block third-party trackers, cookies, link tracking, referrer tracking, and fingerprinting attempts. It uses "privacy by design," meaning that when it estimates location through an IP address, it immediately discards both the IP and the guessed location. DuckDuckGo earns money from contextual advertising based on the current search, not from building long-term user profiles.

Positive Independent Reviews

PrivacyJournal praises DuckDuckGo because it never saves search history or builds a profile of its users. The review also highlights that the tracker-blocking feature is stronger than what is offered by many mainstream browsers and is easy to use. A review from Norton points out that DuckDuckGo lets people search without being profiled or targeted by personalized ads. Norton also notes that DuckDuckGo blocks many online trackers and protects search history, which improves user privacy.

Negative Independent Reviews

A review from Avast warns that DuckDuckGo's tracker blocking may not stop every new or unknown tracker that appears online. It also states that the browser provides less protection against malicious websites compared to some security-focused browsers. StandsApp points out that DuckDuckGo offers only limited defense against advanced fingerprinting techniques. The same source adds that third-party agreements and technical weaknesses could allow some tracking despite the company's privacy claims.

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How the Tool Works

DuckDuckGo is a search engine and browser extension that reduces the amount of data connected to a user's identity. It does this by refusing to store search history, blocking third-party cookies and trackers, and limiting techniques that websites use to identify visitors. Because it shows only contextual ads and discards IP addresses after making location guesses, it avoids building personal advertising profile. Each search is treated as a separate event, which makes it harder to link searches back to a single person.

Strength and Weakness

The strength of DuckDuckGo is that it provides strong privacy protections right from the start, which means users do not need to install extra add-ons or adjust complicated settings to stay safer online. It automatically blocks many types of online trackers and cookies, prevents advertising networks from following users across different sites, and does not store or share a person's search history. Because it earns money only from ads based on the current search rather than long-term user profiles, it removes the need to collect personal data and helps create a more private search experience. The browser and mobile app are also simple to use and feel similar to other popular search engines, so people can gain these protections without changing their normal browsing habits.

The weakness of DuckDuckGo is that it cannot completely hide a person's identity on its own, because it is still just a search engine and not a full privacy solution like a VPN or the Tor network. Internet service providers can still see which websites a person visits and can log their IP address unless another tool is used to hide it. Advanced tracking methods, such as browser fingerprinting, can sometimes combine details like screen size, fonts, and device settings to create a unique digital profile that may identify a user even when cookies are blocked.

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How the product decreases the chances of Identity being exposed if trying to interact anonymously online

DuckDuckGo lowers the chance of having your identity exposed by carefully limiting the data that can be collected about you while you search and browse. It does not keep a record of your past searches, so there is no long-term history that can be linked back to your name, email address, or device. Its tracker-blocking technology stops advertising networks and third-party analytics tools from following you across different websites, which makes it harder for companies to build a detailed profile of your habits.

Circumstances where you might be identified anyway

A user can still be identified if they sign in to accounts or share personal details while browsing. Internet service providers can see network traffic and IP addresses unless another tool, such as a VPN, is used. Advanced browser fingerprinting can match a unique combination of device settings and reveal identity. Visiting websites outside DuckDuckGo's protections or clicking on links that allow tracking can also expose a user's real information.