

Takia Tanjib

Intro to web development

Professor Mark

May 06, 2025

## **How Cookies Track Website Usage**

Cookies are small text files that websites store on a user's device to remember information about their visit. As users browse a site, cookies can record pages visited, items clicked, login status, preferences, and even details entered in forms. This data helps websites provide personalized experiences by remembering user actions and preferences across sessions. For example, an e-commerce site might use cookies to keep items in a shopping cart or suggest products based on browsing history.

## **Positive Aspects**

Cookies enable convenient features like staying logged in across visits, saving shopping carts, and remembering language preferences. They help websites load faster by storing basic user data locally rather than retrieving it from servers repeatedly. For businesses, cookies provide analytics about user behavior that can improve website design and functionality.

## **Negative Aspects**

Some cookies (especially third-party tracking cookies) can compromise privacy by building detailed profiles of users' browsing habits across multiple sites. Users often don't know what data is being collected or how it's used. Persistent cookies may continue tracking users long after they leave a website unless manually cleared.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The use of cookies is ethical when:

1. Websites clearly disclose their cookie policies
2. Users can opt-in/opt-out of non-essential cookies
3. Data collection is limited to what's necessary for functionality
4. Collected data is properly secured

Unethical practices include hidden tracking, selling user data without consent, or using cookies to enable discriminatory practices. Transparency and user control are key to ethical cookie usage.