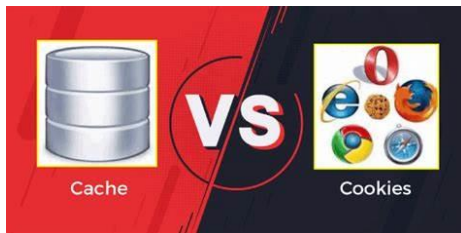


Article #92 - Computer Cache and Cookies
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You may have been advised to clear your cache or delete your cookies to resolve an online problem. Indeed, clearing them can solve a variety of issues. And, clearing them rarely causes much computer grief. So, understanding cache and cookies and being ready, and fearless, to clear them can be an easy fix to vexing web problems.

Web pages are “cached”, or copied, to fast internal storage in your computer to speed access to the Internet. Retrieving a page from internal storage is significantly faster than downloading it. Your browser has various ways to determine whether the cached page is still current. Sometimes it is wrong. Other times the cached page is broken. Clearing cache forces all pages to be freshly downloaded from the Internet. New copies will then start being cached.

Cookies are small files used to store data to facilitate your use of a specific online site. They might contain your preferences for that website, speed your logging in to the site, and permit you to stay logged in for the duration of your session. But, sometimes, the website might not be able to interpret the cookie; sometimes the cookie is broken. Clearing cookies can provide a fresh start. See: “[What are ‘cookies’ and should they concern you?](#)”

If a page that you are trying to access will not load, looks weird, or is acting funky, the problem might be in your cache and cookies. So, you might try clearing them before calling your favorite techie. You will hardly notice anything different when you clear cache. Temporarily, web pages may load more slowly. This will likely not even be detectable. So, start by clearing the cache.

If this does not resolve the problem, go after the cookies. Since your website-specific preferences are stored in cookies, once cleared, these preferences will be “forgotten”, and you will have to re-enter them. You may need to again tell the site to “remember” you on this computer, that your nickname is Joe, or that you prefer sports stories, rather than politics.

Cache and cookies are specific to each browser and reside in that browser’s storage area. So, if you use Chrome and Firefox, you will have two separate sets of cache and cookies, one for each. Clearing your cache or cookies from within Chrome will not clear your Firefox cache and cookies and vice versa. I periodically clear my cache and cookies, just “to clear the cobwebs” and possibly prevent future problems.

It is only partially true that cache and cookies are “temporary”. They generally have expiration dates. But these dates may be far into the future. The longer they hang around, the more likely they may become dated or broken. This article in PC Magazine provides instructions for clearing cache and cookies for all common browsers. Read it and practice so that you are ready.

<https://www.pcmag.com/how-to/how-to-clear-your-cache-on-any-browser>

Bro. Hal Bookbinder is a retired Information Technology Director and College Instructor. Prior article in this series can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/SafeComputingArticles>.