

## The Cookie Law Explained

The Cookie Law is a piece of privacy legislation that requires websites to get consent from visitors to store or retrieve any information on a computer, smartphone or tablet.

It was designed to protect online privacy, by making consumers aware of how information about them is collected and used online, and give them a choice to allow it or not.

### Site Owners Start Complying

It started as an **EU Directive** that was adopted by all EU countries in May 2011. The Directive gave individuals rights to refuse the use of cookies that reduce their online privacy. Each country then updated its own laws to comply. In the UK this meant an update to the **Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations**.

### Why Cookie Law?

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Almost all websites use cookies – little data files – to store information in peoples' web browsers. Some websites contain hundreds of them.

There are other technologies, like Flash and HTML5 Local Storage that do similar things, and these are also covered by the legislation, but as cookies are the most common technology in use, it has become known as the **Cookie Law**.

### What are Cookies Anyway?

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Cookies are a kind of short-term memory for the web. They are stored in your browser and enable a site to 'remember' little bits of information between pages or visits.

They are widely used to make the web experience more personal, which is generally seen as a positive thing. However, some cookies collect data across many websites, creating ‘behavioral profiles’ of people. These profiles can then be used to decide what content or adverts to show you. This use of cookies for targeting in particular is what the law was designed to highlight. By requiring websites to inform and obtain consent from visitors it aims to give web users more control over their online privacy.

To find out lots more about cookies in general and the different types, take a look at [Cookiepedia](#) – the leading information resource all about cookies.