




## That's the Way the Cookie Data Trail Crumbles: What Data Should You Be Tracking?

What's the deal with accepting all these website cookies? I accept them, but I don't get any cookies. Did I need to accept milk too? I hope you read that in Jerry Seinfeld's voice because that is how I wrote it. Did you clear your cookies? Did you enable your cookies? Did you accept these cookies? As a business, now what do I do with this cookie data? We all know about Website cookies (also known as HTTP cookies), but most of us don't think about them. A couple of years ago, most of us noticed something. Every single time we went to a website, we were suddenly met with "Do you agree to our cookie terms?" We blindly clicked yes and grumbled at this new task we had to do to browse. But what did we just say yes to?

### Types of Cookies

How many times do you blindly click accept to a user agreement? Most of us do it, especially when it has to do with something that we believe doesn't have much power over us. Cookies are one of these things. How could accepting a cookie go wrong? Why would asking our customers to agree to cookies be bad? How do consumers feel about agreeing to cookies?

First, let's back up. What is an HTTP cookie? Every website session leaves cookies. Session cookies are temporary bits of information that help remember preferences in the session. They are deleted once you close the browser



Aside from session cookies, there are two types of persistent cookies.

1. Persistent cookies by first-party cookies are stored on your computer even after you close your browser. The website owner uses them to enhance your experience by automatically logging you in or remembering your preferences, like location.z
2. Persistent cookies by third-party are similar to first-party cookies, but the data is collected by “information brokers.” They take your information and make it possible for advertisers to use it to target you with ads.

Ideally, you would only want your company to use first-party cookies because then your customers agree to a personalized experience through your company. This gives you the data you need to keep engaging with your audience, unlike third-party, which sells the customer’s data and leaves a bad taste in most consumers’ mouths.

## **Crumbling Cookie Convenience**

You probably remember, a few years ago, you did not have to click that annoying little banner about accepting cookies. So, what happened? After the GDPR went into effect, companies needed to notify you that they would be collecting data from your visit. In order to do that, they now require your permission; hence, a lot of websites started adding cookie notifications. Your company may have implemented this already, or perhaps a vendor added it for you with the promise of collecting data for better sales. You also might not be affected by GDPR and haven’t added it yet.

A lot of us blindly started to hit no, because we really wanted to visit that site. Marketers thrive on that need for convenience. 47% of consumers expect a web page to load in 2 seconds or less, and 40% of people abandon a website that takes more than 3 seconds to load. Remember when it took 20 minutes just to get on the internet? We have trained humans to be impatient. This impatience certainly helped marketers gather data from cookies. Most individuals don’t take the time to read that they have another option, let alone explore that option. So, accept, accept, accept, becomes commonplace.

So...what happens if we hit no? The website won’t work, correct? Will the internet implode? The answer is nothing, really. So, then why does anyone click yes? Or how can you ensure your customers will hit yes but not feel violated?



## Bake Your Own Batch

Like we said, most consumers don't click the learn more (or other appropriately named button) next to the more predominant accept button. If they did, they would find your cookie policy. If you haven't started tracking cookies yet, or someone else is handling that, it is essential to know what kind of cookies you want to track. As a customer, you should also be clicking that learn more button.

Once inside learn more, you will find what kind of cookies they are tracking and have the option to change their presets. So, you can usually turn-off third-party if they are tracking those. You'll find different websites have different marketing jargon for their cookies, but the words should be obvious; if they are not, turn them off.

Google has announced it will be phasing out third-party cookies by 2022, so if you are using them, it might be time to rethink that strategy and move to first-party cookies only. If you haven't added third-party cookies, it might be useful to leave them behind. As you plan your cookie policy, it is essential to think about the customer reading that "learn more" page, even if they don't ever read it. How do you want your information used? Your data? Humanizing data is treating it ethically and thinking about the human behind that data. If you have an outside firm handling this, or an internal team, it might be time to have a conversation about how your company is being served to the public.