

Cookies

Facilitation Guide

Share information about cookies, including how they work, their benefits and drawbacks, and ways to avoid tracking cookies.

Overview

This module introduces learners to cookies and uncovers how cookies work, how they can be beneficial, and how to avoid more invasive, tracking cookies. This module utilizes an interactive game to help learners better understand how cookies work.

For more information, be sure to watch Series 2 of NYC Digital Safety Training Videos.

Outcomes

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define cookies
- Describe the uses of cookies online, include benefits and drawbacks
- Identify methods for avoiding tracking cookies

Format + Time Frame

This module provides an overview of tracking cookies online and features an interactive game where learners can develop and test their knowledge.

This module will take approximately 60 to 65 minutes to complete and includes an activity and time for discussion.

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Materials

- Slide deck
- Facilitation guide
- Handout
- Cookie Memory Challenge instructions and answer key

Lesson Plan

Activity	Materials	Time Needed
Welcome and introduction Greet learners and review the plan for this module.	Slides 1 and 2	2 minutes
Define cookies Provide a brief definition of cookies and see if anyone has any questions or anything to add.	Slide 3	3 minutes
What cookies do; types of cookies Provide an overview of different types of cookies and how they function. See if anyone has any questions.	Slides 4 through 6	7 minutes
Discussion: Opting out of cookies See if learners will alter their approach to cookies based on what you have presented so far.	Slide 7	10 minutes
What cookies contain Explain what cookies contain and what tasks they perform.	Slides 8 through 9	5 minutes

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How to manage cookies Review the suggestions for managing cookies, as well as the pros and cons of these approaches	Slides 10 through 11	5 minutes
Activity: Cookie Memory Challenge Allow your learners to test what they've learned with a matching and sorting game	Slide 12, guided handout	20 minutes
Activity wrap-up Conclude this activity with a brief discussion about what people learned and their takeaways.	Slide 13	5 minutes
Wrap up, final tips, and final questions Review the closing thoughts and share the suggested resources. See if anyone has any final questions.	Slides 14 through 16	5 minutes

Considerations

Internet cookies can be a somewhat confusing topic. Cookies are a term we all hear regularly, but it isn't always immediately obvious what cookies are, how they work, and what they are used for online. Be sure to spend some time defining cookies and ensuring that everyone is on the same page before proceeding to the game.

This game is designed to help learners identify different kinds of cookies and learn more about how cookies work online. Leave some time for discussion afterwards since learners might have observations to share, or questions to ask, based on their game experience.

You might consider sharing handouts and resources from some related lessons, including Targeted Advertising and Ad Settings online.

Options and Variations

This matching game is designed to be done with a group of learners, ideally in-person. If you are doing an online workshop, you could adapt this game by having learners get into small groups in breakout rooms and work through the cards together, or you could use a poll or online quiz software to help learners work through the content.

While this game is designed as a group activity, you could still share it with an individual learner and have them work through the material on their own via the guided handout. If a learner is completing the activity and handout on their own, be sure to supply them with an answer key for the matching game.

Assessment

The following are some suggested assessment questions that you can use and adapt for your own purposes. These questions can help you assess various things, including knowledge retention, personal views and preferences, and concept application.

You might consider asking these as a pre or post test, or you can have learners answer these as part of an exit survey or a follow-up survey. Keep reading for suggested questions and an answer key with further details and explanations.

Questions for Participants

What is an internet cookie?

- A. A type of targeted ad
- B. Another way of talking about your browser history
- C. A sort of login token
- D. A piece of data that stores information about a user's activity on a website and stores it for later
- E. A delicious snack

What are cookies not designed to do?

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- A. Remember your user preferences
- B. Customize your experience on a site
- C. Track your activity on a website
- D. Add a new feature to your web browser

How can you NOT avoid tracking cookies?

- A. Adjust your web browser settings to block third-party cookies
- B. Delete cookies on your devices regularly
- C. Block all cookies
- D. Use a browser extension to manage cookies

Answer Key

What is an internet cookie?

Answer: D, A piece of data that stores information about a user's activity on a website and stores it for later

Cookies are small pieces of data that store information about a user's activity on a website. There are a wide range (or flavors!) of cookies. Some store information that helps you manage your shopping card on a site, or login more easily. Other cookies track your behavior and are used to generate targeted ads for you.

What are cookies designed to do? Select all that apply

Answer: D, Add a new feature to your web browser

Cookies store information about your activity and use that information to customize settings, remember preferences, and/or target you with ads. Option D is something that a browser extension does.

How can you avoid tracking cookies? Select all that apply

Answer: B, Delete cookies on your devices regularly

Using a browser extension or setting up your browser to block third-party cookies is a good way to avoid tracking cookies. Blocking all cookies is generally not recommended since that can negatively affect the functionality of a website.

Connections to Other Modules

This module connects to many other modules. The following suggestions provide opportunities for exploration, connection, and potential programming. However, feel free to explore and make connections between other modules not listed here as well!

1.2 Data Minimization

2.1 Targeted Ads

2.1 Algorithms

2.2 Social Media Settings

2.2 Ad Settings

These and other modules can be found at this project's website, nycdigitalsafety.org.

About This Project

These materials were released in October 2022 as part of NYC Digital Safety: Privacy & Security.

NYC Digital Safety: Privacy & Security is a partnership between New York City's three library systems — Brooklyn Public Library, The New York Public Library, and Queens Library — and METRO Library Council. With support from the New York City Office of Technology and Innovation, this project ensures that NYC residents can rely on public libraries for their questions about internet privacy and security.

Visit nycdigitalsafety.org for more information.