Natasha's Website

Cookie Policy

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Contents

In Brief

Natasha's Website (www.natashamoorfield.co.uk) uses cookies to improve its functionality but it will only set cookies on your machine if you consent to it doing so.

If the website finds its own "Cookie Consent" cookie in your browser, it will assume that you have already given consent and will not ask for it again. Otherwise, it will seek your permission by means of a cookie message bar that it will display at the top of each page. To accept cookies, simply click the `[Accept Cookies]` button in the message bar.

This document explains what cookies are and how, specifically, they are used by the site.

1 What are Cookies?

1.1 The Basic Mechanics of Cookies

HTTP cookies are small packets of information sent by a web server (the computer on which the website you are visiting resides) to your web browser (the software you use to surf the web). The browser then stores that information on your computer[1]. Each time you request a new page from the site, the information in those cookies is sent back to the server. The server may then use that information to customize the new page and may update the information with any new data you have provided.

Each cookie is specific to the device and browser to which it was originally sent. This means that if you later access the same website from a different machine or just using a different browser, the website will not be able to see the cookies it sent previously; it will therefore treat you as a new (or different) visitor to the site and may send you some fresh cookies.

1.2 The Basic Purpose of Cookies

Typically, cookies help web servers identify returning visitors, remember which pages they've seen, their preferences, selections they've made (such as items placed in a shopping cart) and any other information that would otherwise be lost due to the stateless nature of the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP). This exchange of information helps websites work seamlessly without users having to re-identify themselves or re-input information every time they return to the site or load a fresh page from it.

1.3 Information Stored by Cookies

A cookie can store any information the server chooses to put in it, including personal information about the user. Cookies can, however, only store and retrieve data that users themselves have provided and, just because they can store personal information, does not mean they always do. The mere existence of a cookie is, sometimes, enough to tell the server all it needs to know.

Although information in a cookie is always stored as text, it is not generally in human readable form. The information may be encrypted or the cookie may hold only a random but essentially unique text string which is

[1] Your browser may store cookies either as plain text files or in a database; either way, it should provide you with means to examine and delete them. The browser's documentation should also explain how and where they are stored so you can create, read, update and delete them independently of the browser if you're so minded. Third party browser add-ons (such as Firebug, if you're a Firefox user) can also provide you with useful tools for examining and manipulating cookies.

used as an ID to link with data stored on the server. This means that, although the cookie itself might be small, the information linked to it could be extensive.

1.4 Concerns about Cookies

1.4.1 What Cookies Cannot Do

It is important to understand that cookies cannot be used to:

- infect your device with viruses or other malware;
- extract information you have not already sent to the server yourself or
- access any other files or execute programs on your computer.

1.4.2 Privacy Issues

Cookies are, however, increasingly being used to track users' browsing habits across multiple websites enabling, amongst other things, commercial agencies to match advertising to the profiles they build up of individual users. Many people are uneasy about this perceived intrusion into their privacy, hence the need for me to explain what my website does with its cookies and the requirement for me to have your informed consent before I send you any.

2 What Does Natasha's Website Use Cookies For?

2.1 Quick Overview

Currently, *Natasha's Website* sets two cookies: a general purpose 'session' cookie (which at the present time does nothing at all) and a 'persistent' cookie to show that the user has agreed to accept cookies from the site. Table 1 lists the cookies currently in use.

Table 1: *Cookies Used by* Natasha's Website

Name	Value	Purpose	Expiry
PHPSESSID	UUID (v4)	None. See Section 2.2.1	*Session*
cookieConsent	'yes'	To confirm cookie consent. See Section 2.2.2	1 Year

2.2 Specific Cookie Usage

2.2.1 PHPSESSID

This cookie serves no purpose at the present time. Its primary use, in due course, will be to maintain user login credentials through a session.

2.2.2 cookieConsent

The existence of this cookie indicates that the user has consented to the use of cookies. Its value is not interrogated by the server and is, therefore, entirely arbitrary. Prior to Version 1.1.0 of this cookie policy, the value was set to a v4 UUID; it is currently set to the simple text string 'yes'.

The user's consent is assumed to persist for twelve months after she has given it or until she chooses to withdraw it by deleting the site's cookies from her browser.

2.3 Universally Unique Identifiers (UUIDs)

Cookies from *Natasha's Website* that contain no explicit data have their values set to random but essentially unique identifiers – either a PHP Session ID or a Version 4 UUID. These values cannot in themselves be used to identify you, your location, your computer or your network connection. Where an ID is used to link the cookie with information held on the server, the information to which it links will be made clear in the description of the individual cookie.

2.4 Usage Limitations

In future development of the site, the use of cookies will be limited to:

(a) recognising you and remembering your preferences when you request new pages or return to the website;

(b) enabling you, through privileged user log-ins, to use certain parts or functions of the website that would not otherwise be available to you;

(c) personalizing what is presented to you by the website;

(d) improving the website's accessibility and general usability;

(e) analysing how the website is being used;

(f) detecting and preventing malicious use of the website.

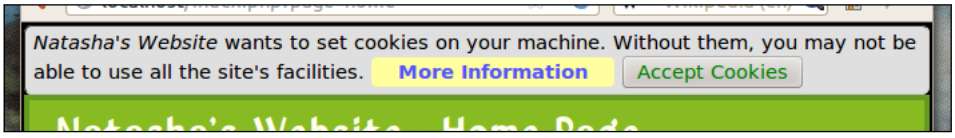
3 Can I Use Natasha's Website Without Cookies?

3.1 Using the Site Without Any Cookies

The basic functionality of the site will, where possible, remain available to everyone regardless of whether they accept cookies. You will not be denied access to any public parts of the site if you choose not to. Development of the public areas will keep to a minimum any critical dependency upon cookies. Cookies may, however, be used to make any and all parts of the site easier to use or nicer to look at and to provide 'privileged user' access to the site; these features will not be available without accepting cookies. I cannot, however, guarantee that functionality reliant upon cookies will fail gracefully or even obviously without them.

The cookie message bar (See Figure 1) should not display if you have set your browser to reject cookies nor once you have chosen to accept them. However, if your browser is set to allow cookies from the site but you do not give your consent to receiving them, you *will* continue to see it; this is because, to remember that you don't want to see it, the site would need to set a cookie.

Figure 1: *The Cookie Message Bar*



3.2 Using the Site Without Third-Party Cookies

Currently, *Natasha's Website* does not facilitate the setting of any third-party cookies nor does it make use of third-party cookies set from elsewhere. You should not suffer any loss of functionality if your browser is set up to reject third party cookies. Should it happen, in the future, that third-party cookies are set or utilised by this website then full details will be published in this document.

4 What are the Different Types of Cookies?

4.1 Session and Persistent Cookies

Cookies come in two distinct flavours: **Session** and **Persistent**.

4.1.1 Session Cookies

Session cookies expire and are deleted by your web browser as soon as you close your browser and thus end your browsing session.

4.1.2 Persistent Cookies

Persistent cookies are not deleted by the browser until the expiry date set for them by the web server. They can be set to last for days, months or even years before expiry. You can, however, always delete them yourself; your browser should give you the facility to do this either for individual cookies, individual websites or *en masse*.

4.2 First-party and Third-party Cookies

Strictly speaking, first- and third-party cookies are not different *types* of cookie at all; a third-party cookie in one context can be first-party in another. To look at they are indistinguishable save that those in your browser which appear to come from sites you have never visited *were* very likely set as third-party cookies. The difference between first- and third-party cookies is where they come from and how they get to your browser.

4.2.1 First-Party Cookies

A **first-party** cookie is one that is set, for its own use, by the website you are visiting. First-party cookies are the ones most likely to be useful to you as the website user.

4.2.2 Third-Party Cookies

A **third-party** cookie is one set or retrieved by a website different to the one you are actually visiting. Usually, this happens when a website you are browsing loads content from a third-party website. This will often be a site which serves advertising but any website has the potential to do it. Through the third-party cookie, a link is created between the third-party website and your visit to the site you are actually using. Over time, the third-party website, upon finding its cookies on your browser when you visit other sites on which it has a presence, is able to build up a profile of your web activity, which it can then use pretty much as it chooses. Typically, this will be to tailor advertising to match the profile it has built up of you.

Not all third-party cookies are used solely to track your activity for someone else's benefit whilst giving you nothing in return. Comments you leave on your favourite blogs, for example, being automatically linked with your social networking account couldn't happen without third-party cookies[2].

Natahsa's Website doesn't currently use or facilitate third-party cookies but if do you have concerns about third-party cookies you believe have been set in your browser as a result of a visit here, please let me know.

[2] No doubt the social networking site is *also* tracking your online activity for its own nefarious purposes but you get the general idea, I hope, that cross-site interaction facilitated by third-party cookies is not, necessarily, always a bad thing.

5 What Other Usage Tracking is Employed?

5.1 Basic Site Statistics

All web traffic, everywhere, is logged and visits to *Natasha's Website* are no exception. All access requests are recorded by the web hosting service and, in turn, made available to me. These data are collected, so far as I can tell, without the use of cookies. No personally identifiable data are supplied to me by this service. The data are not publicly available and will not be passed on to any other parties or made public by me.

5.2 Google Analytics

Natasha's Website does not use "Google Analytics" or any similar third party technology to track your use of this site.

6 Can I Stop Accepting Cookies from You?

If you decide to stop accepting cookies from *Natasha's Website*, there's a handy `[Clear Cookies]` button on the Cookies Page (See Figure 2). Clicking this will wipe all the site's cookies from your browser; you will not receive any more unless you press the `[Accept Cookies]` button again.

Figure 2: *The Clear Cookies Button*

7 Can I Select Which of Your Cookies I Receive?

The website itself currently provides no facility to fine tune your acceptance of cookies; it's all or nothing. Your web browser, however, may provide some options to fine tune how it deals with cookies; see the browser's documentation or help system for more information. You may wish to experiment with a few different browsers to find one that best suits your requirements.

8 Should I be Wary of Accepting Cookies?

8.1 From Natasha's Website

I do hope you will choose to accept cookies from *Natasha's Website* so that you can be sure of getting the best possible experience from it. You may be assured that the privacy and security of all visitors to the site are very important to me but, if you decide otherwise, I'll understand; after all, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean I'm *not* out to get you...

8.2 In General

There are plenty of things out there on the interwebs far more dangerous than cookies; as a tool for carrying out malicious or criminal activity, they really don't cut the mustard. Yes, aggressive advertising facilitated by third-party cookies *can* be very annoying and feel quite intrusive but, in my opinion, cookies only have the potential of putting your online privacy and security at risk if your other online habits are lax. If there *are* websites using cookies maliciously, you can be sure that won't be the only bad thing they're up to and blocking cookies will provide very little defence.

On balance, I would say that the benefits of cookies far outweigh the risks. YMMV.

A More Information about Cookies

A.1 General Information

- Wikipedia
- AllAboutCookies.org

A.2 Statutory Requirements

- The requirement for UK based websites to obtain informed consent from users before cookies can be deployed is contained in The Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) (Amendment) Regulations 2011.
- Responsibility for enforcing compliance with these regulations in the UK rests with the Information Commissioner's Office.

B Document Version Convention

B.1 Version Identifier

Each new version of this document shall be given a unique version identifier in the form $x.y.z$ where

- x is the major revision identifier;
- y is the minor revision identifier and
- z is the maintenance revision identifier.

The original release of this document was version 1.0.0.

B.2 Maintenance Revision

A maintenance revision occurs when amendments are made

(a) to correct

  (i) spelling mistakes;

  (ii) grammatical errors **or**

  (iii) other minor typographical errors;

(b) which, without substantially altering any facts or intended meanings, change the words used in or the syntax of a section heading, paragraph, sentence or footnote in order to

  (i) improve readability;

  (ii) better convey the intended meaning **or**

  (iii) better match the general style of the document;

(c) which alter the type-setting or physical layout (but not the logical structure) of the document;

(d) to add, repair, correct or delete internal or external hyperlinks;

(e) which add, replace or delete any illustrative images or diagrams **or**

(f) which add, amend or delete material to any Appendices.

A maintenance revision increments the z value by one[3].

[3] So, for example, if a maintenance revision is made to version 3.3.6, the amended version becomes 3.3.7.

B.3 Minor Revision

A minor revision occurs when material is added, amended or deleted in order to

(a) add, correct or delete any factual information;

(b) amend the intended meaning of any part of the document;

(c) codify a previously unwritten assumption or protocol;

(d) resolve *non sequiturs*, contradictions or ambiguities **or**

(e) amend the structure of the document such that top-level section numbers are changed or a particular subject matter is moved between one top-level section and another.

A minor revision increments the y value by one and resets the z value to zero[4].

B.4 Major Revision

A major revision occurs when any change is made to

(a) the number of cookies that are or might be used by the site;

(b) the way in which a cookie is used that materially affects the user experience;

(c) the way in which any saved information is used by the site **or**

(d) the site's cookie usage limitations.

A major revision increments the x value by one and resets the y and z values to zero[5].

B.5 Alpha, Beta and Release Candidate Versions

During development work, new versions of this document in alpha (α), beta (β) or release candidate (RC) form may be created. These are not intended for release into the public domain and should not to be regarded as official versions of the document.

[4] So, for example, if a minor revision is made to version 3.3.6, the amended version becomes 3.4.0.

[5] So, for example, if a major revision is made to version 3.3.6, the amended version becomes 4.0.0.