

The Ins and Outs of Cookies

What is it about techies and naming things? In the computer world, a “bus” can’t take passengers, a “port” has no ships and you certainly don’t want vinegar on your “chips”.

But worst of all, in my book, computer cookies are completely lacking in chocolate chips.

A cookie (in the computer world) is a small file that a website puts onto your computer to store some information. It might be to remember your email address or password, so you don’t need to log in again, or to store what products you’ve looked at in a web shop so it can display them straight away next time. In some cases it might even be to remember what type of products you looked at, so it can show you similar, but different ones next time.

(They’re also sometimes called browser cookies or tracker cookies – it’s exactly the same thing)

The problem comes when you find your computer is having trouble accessing something because it won’t allow the website to store a cookie.

For example, say you want to log in to a website where you need a password (for example, the Inner Circle). You don’t mind if the computer doesn’t remember it for next time, so you might think it doesn’t matter if your computer won’t allow cookies.

But the website uses the cookie to store the fact that you got the password right. So if your PC won’t allow it to store cookies at all, you can’t access the site at all.

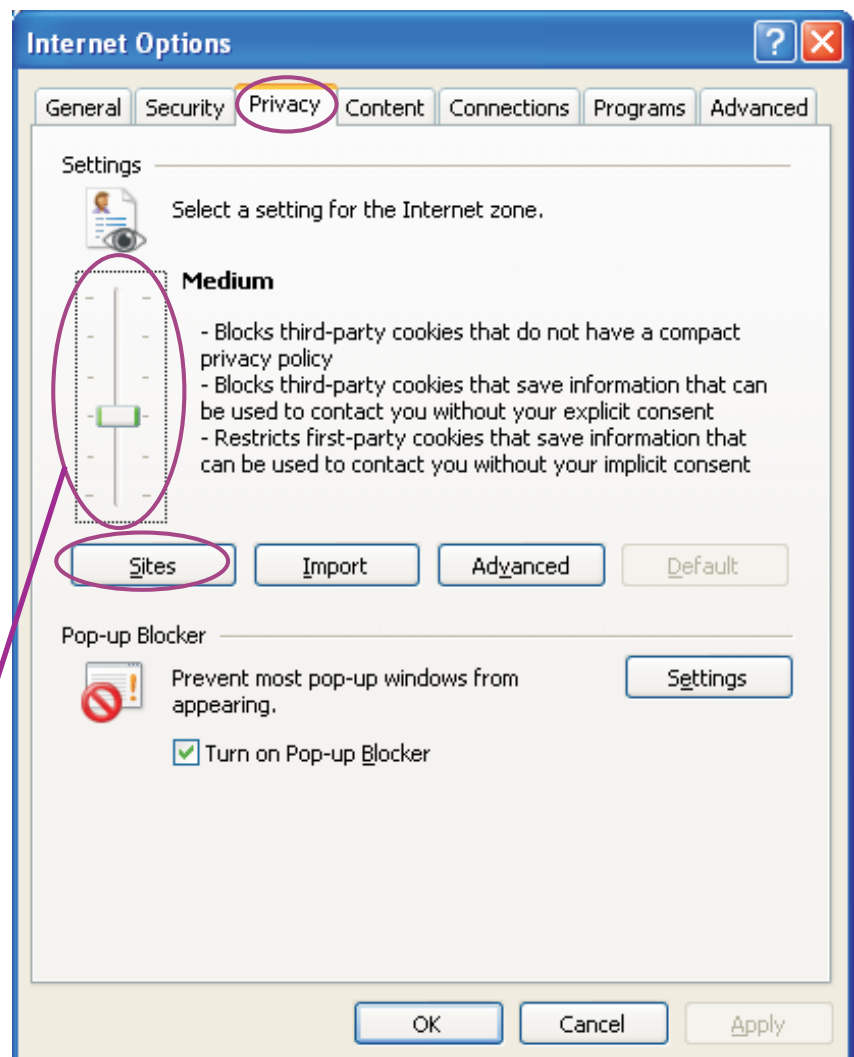
Another problem might come if you’re using a shopping website – it might use cookies to store what products you’ve clicked on. If you have cookies turned off, when you click to add something it might seem to work – but when you check, the basket will be empty.

So you might need to set your PC to allow cookies – at least for that website. Here’s how:

Start up Internet Explorer, go to Tools and to Internet Options. Click on the privacy tab.

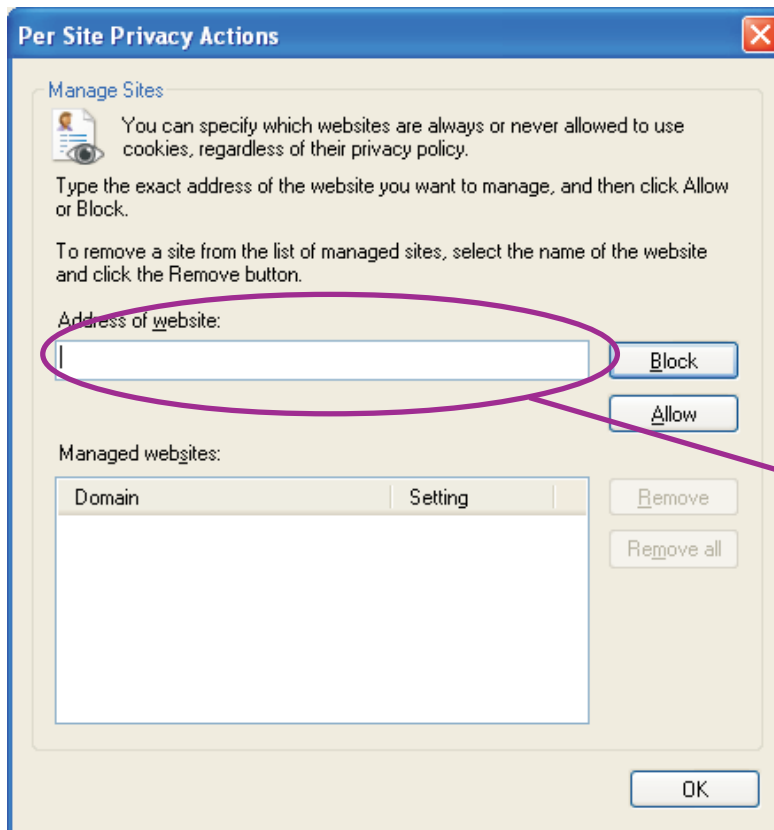
You should have a slider, like this:

I’d leave it set to Medium.



More importantly, click on “Sites”

You should get a screen a bit like this:



This is where you can choose to allow a particular website to use cookies – regardless of other settings. Or you can choose to stop a particular website from being allowed to use cookies, regardless of your other settings.

If there's already a listing for the website – for example if it says “www.pcinnercircle.co.uk - Always block” and that's causing you problems, click on that and then click on remove. Then it'll treat that website the same as any other.

If you want to tell it to allow or block a particular website, type the web address into the “address of website” box. You don't need the whole thing, just the bit after the www up to the .com or .co.uk For example, type in just pcinnercircle.co.uk – you don't need the www

Then click on either “block” to stop a website or “allow” to always allow a website to use cookies.

Then click on OK and it's done.