

COOKIES AND COLDFUSION

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The following passage has been taken from an IT English Reader compiled by Katalin Fazekas and published in Hungary in 2001 by Szamalk Publisher. The IT Reader comprises low intermediate and intermediate passages downloaded and revised with an introduction on general IT terms and the main fields of IT studies (What is a computer, What is a network, Hardware/Software, Data security etc.). The book's main objectives are to increase IT students' knowledge of specific vocabulary and to improve their reading skills.

Nowadays, cookies have become almost as commonplace on the Web as images or tables. And they do all kinds of stuff: they help Web designers manage user information (by storing it between site visits) and decrease the amount of overhead necessary to keep track of user information, like usernames, encrypted passwords, form variables, and shopping cart information. And they also make things easier on users by eliminating the need to log on to a site every time they visit, or making it easy to personalize content on sites. (One man's trash is another man's treasure, and now neither of them need see the other one's useless drivel.)

Because cookies are so ubiquitous, they've become an essential tool; any Web developer must be able to use them. So you probably have a good working background on cookies already, especially since you've surely read Webmonkey's "That's the Way the Cookie Crumbles" and "Cookies Revisited" (the Web Developer's On-line Resource, <http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey>). And doubtlessly, you know how to implement cookies with PHP (a widely-used general purpose scripting language) or JavaScript (an object-based scripting language).

Basically, cookies are simply strings of text. Nothing more, nothing less. But even so, differences in browsers and browser settings can be a nightmare for developers who depend on cookies to make their site run smoothly.

Another problem with cookies is that you're limited in the amount of information you can store in each one. Both Netscape and IE (MS Internet Explorer) have maximum size restrictions for the data that can actually fit into a cookie as well as the number of cookies that can be stored. (For more information on these restrictions, check out one of Thau's overviews - a well-known programmer in JavaScript, who has written several tutorials on how to use this software. There

are 67.500 hits for his name in Google.) So it's a good rule to use cookies to store only information that's absolutely necessary, and then store additional information elsewhere.

Vocabulary (expressions in bold are IT vocabulary):

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Stuff (n) | things, operations |
| Decrease (v) | opposite of increase, make less |
| Overhead (n) | expenses per capita |
| Amount (n) | sum |
| Eliminate (v) | cancel, get rid of, remove |
| Trash (n) | garbage, waste |
| Nightmare (n) | bad dream |
| Smoothly (adv) | without problems |
| Restriction (n) | limitation |

Match the half sentences so that two of them make sense:

1. Cookies are good for all kinds of stuff like
 2. For developers who depend on cookies
 3. Since the amount of info you can have in a cookie is limited
 4. If a Web developer reads Cookies Revisited
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- a. you have to store info that is absolutely necessary
 - b. they will know how to use a cookie
 - c. managing user info, decreasing the amount of overhead, remembering usernames etc.

d. browsers can be a nuisance.

Topics to discuss:

1. Have you ever come across a cookie? If you have, what was it like?
2. When you hear the word „overhead”, what kind of expenses do you think of?
3. Try to find more data on cookie restrictions!
4. Find more information on cookies by going to one of Google's 7,500,000 hits!