

The Zombie Cookie Apocalypse

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Privacy online

- Most people know about cookies.
 - They're good, and allow the web to behave like an app for users.
 - But can be used by advertisers to know more about you, and to monetise that.
 - You can clear them in your browser
- Browsers have 'private' mode
 - "Private Browsing" in Firefox
 - "Incognito windows" in Chrome


However....

- Even in "private" mode, or having deleted your cookies, they can still know who you are.
- Flash allows sites to store information like cookies.
- This information isn't blanked when you delete your cookie.
 - It's even shared between browsers.
 - Doubleclick knows that it's still you, even though you're in chrome rather than firefox.

Demo

What to do?

- Configure flash.



The screenshot displays the Adobe Flash Player Settings Manager interface. It features a title bar with the text "Adobe Flash Player™ Settings Manager" and a help icon. Below the title bar are five tabs: "Global Storage Settings", "Website Storage Settings", "Privacy", "Content Advisor", and "Content Advisor". The "Global Storage Settings" tab is selected and active. It contains the following text: "Specify the amount of disk space that websites you haven't yet visited can use to store information on your computer." Below this text is a slider control set to "100 KB" and a checkbox labeled "Never Ask Again" which is unchecked. There are two checked checkboxes: "Allow third-party Flash content to store data on your computer." and "Store common Flash components to reduce download times." Below the settings is a table with the following data:

Privacy	Websites			
*	www.muscular-dystrophy	1 KB	100 KB	
*	cdn.taboolasyndication.cc	-	100 KB	
*	5min.com	1 KB	100 KB	
*	pfiles.5min.com	1 KB	100 KB	

Note: The Settings Manager that you see above is not an image; it is the actual Settings Manager. Click the tabs to see different panels, and click the options in the panels to change your Adobe Flash Player settings.

What to do?

- ~~Configure flash.~~
 - It's not that good, and can get annoying. It'll also probably break some sites.
- Just stop worrying, google knows everything anyway.
- ~~Uninstall flash~~
 - Same downsides...
- Plugin to just remove the tracking?

See Also

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_Shared_Object
- <http://www.privacychoice.org/>
- "flash website privacy" - I feel lucky
- Other flash security - `crossdomain.xml`

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