

Cookies

Our shopping and membership systems require you to have cookies enabled on your browser.

What is a cookie?

Cookies are harmless pieces of information stored on your computer. They may contain information such as the username you use when visiting a particular site, or keep track of the number of times you have visited a site. Cookies can only be read by you, or the web site that created the cookie in the first place.



Why do you use cookies?

We use cookies to store a unique identity code for your basket. This allows us to securely keep track of the items in your basket, so that you can easily recommence your order if anything goes wrong half way through the shopping process. It also enables you to store items in your basket from different merchants who use the same shopping system. We also use cookies to enable us to provide a members only area. Cookies enable you to stay logged in whilst you browse the members-only areas.

This hasn't been a problem with other sites...

Most websites don't use cookies as they are 'static', ie they just display information. Most 'dynamic' sites where the information changes according to the choices you make on the website use cookies to store information about you. Nearly all shopping sites and other highly functional websites use cookies. The exceptions are those sites (e.g. eBay, online banks and some very large shopping sites) where membership is usually required before you can purchase. With these sites the information normally stored in a cookie is stored against the customer's account on the webserver instead... and this is arguably a greater privacy issue than cookies!

Are cookies a security risk?

No, they are not. Some people believe that they are, however, this is a common misconception, propagated largely by an ill-informed press. In reality, the worst security risk you are likely to face from cookies is that a website owner will be able to 'tag' your browser when you enter their site and find out how often you visit and, perhaps, what pages you like to look at. You may see this as an invasion of your privacy, but it is hardly a security risk. That website owner still cannot access any information about you, except what you knowingly give them by filling in forms. What's more, cookies can generally only be accessed by the web server that set them. So, you still have control over what information you give out, and to whom.

I've been told that cookies are spyware. Is this true?

No. Cookies are NOT spyware. Cookies are information sent by the server to the browser to be stored in a text file on the user's hard drive. Cookies can not: be viruses; steal credit card information; steal banking information; or see what software you have on your computer. A cookie is just a file with textual information set by the server. As explained above, the most a cookie can do is to pass information between pages within a single website/domain. Some companies use this to provide targeted adverts and/or popups.

The main reason some people object to cookies being used is that they provide an indication (to people who have direct access to your PC) to which websites you have visited, but then again, so do the temporary Internet files that your browser generates. If you have been browsing websites that you don't potentially want others to know about, simply delete the temporary files and cookies once you have finished (under tools, internet options).

Do cookies take up space on my hard-drive?

Yes, but it's only a tiny amount and your browser will limit the size of your cookies folder automatically. Also, bear in mind that every webpage you visit is stored temporarily in your browser's cache directory and, depending on your system settings, this can occupy several MegaBytes. Cookies, however, usually won't occupy more than, say 100 Bytes. As a rough guide, that's about 1/400 th of the size of an average webpage and 1/50,000 th of the size of an average cache directory.

What should I do to enable cookies?

To use the shopping system on our site, you must ensure that your computer will accept cookies. Most internet browsers (for example Microsoft Internet Explorer) will allow you selectively allow and disallow cookies. If you use Internet Explorer, then you can enable cookies by:

- 1: Go to the 'Tools' menu
- 2: Click on 'Internet Options'
- 3: Click 'Privacy'
- 4: Move the slider to a lower setting.

I've updated my settings, but it's still not working...

If you have enabled cookies, and you still cannot use our shopping system, then please do one of the following:

- 1: Ensure that your firewall, anti-spyware and other security software are not blocking all cookies.
- 2: Try updating/reinstalling Internet Explorer or installing another browser such as Mozilla Firefox.
- 3: Try using a different computer - another computer may be setup differently and will allow you to use the shopping basket.