

Privacilla.org

Your Source for Privacy Policy from a Free-market, Pro-technology Perspective

Privacy is one of the most difficult public policy issues to sort out, but it can be understood with a little clear thinking and study. Privacy is the condition people enjoy when they have the power to control information about themselves and when they use that power consistent with their interests and values.

The Internet may be hazardous to the privacy of newcomers because information moves and persists there in new ways. To control your online privacy, be sure you understand:

- **IP Addresses** — Every computer on the Internet has a numerical address so that other computers know where to send Web content and e-mail. Others may be able to compile your (computer's) activities using IP addresses.
- **Cookies** — These small files contain codes that your browser collects from, and sends to, particular Web sites so that they can recognize repeat visitors.
- **Web bugs** — Web bugs are invisible graphics that allow people to track what computers (what IP addresses, actually) have viewed a Web page or html e-mail.
- **Encryption** — By encoding information sent over the Internet, users can ensure that it is not stolen in transit or mistakenly revealed to others.
- **Viruses** — If virus protection software is not installed and kept up-to-date, malicious programs can cause your computer to reveal information to others.

With these basic technical concepts in hand, everyone can be better equipped to protect their online privacy.

Understanding the concept of privacy can also help distinguish different concepts that are sometimes called “privacy” in casual discussion. For example:

- The **annoyance** of spam and unwanted marketing happens when *marketers know little or nothing* about people and contact them indiscriminately.
- **Identity Fraud** is a *serious crime* in which personal financial information is used to impersonate a consumer victim and defraud merchant victims.
- **Fairness** results when personal information is kept accurate and when it is used to make *correct decisions* about people.
- **Security** is any number of *practices that protect* information, assets, and business functions, including promises to protect privacy.

Intelligent students of information policy know that privacy and each of these other issues are separate problems with distinct solutions. *Really* intelligent students of privacy visit Privacilla.org (<http://www.privacilla.org>) or e-mail info@privacilla.org to learn more about privacy, privacy law, and privacy policy.