

What are web trackers and how do they work?

A web tracker is a piece of code that gets executed by the browser each time the page containing it gets visited. Certain types of trackers are used in order to monitor how the user interacts with the visited webpage, to know things like the number of visits, the scrolling speed, or the time spent on the page.

This information allows web administrators to know more about their audience and their interests. Web trackers are extensively used for ad purposes by advertising companies for example.

For instance, web administrators may manage different websites on related topics. In order to easily aggregate information from different sources into a single bucket, the web administrator usually places the same piece of code identifying the web tracker in various websites. This is a way for administrators to increase their ability to provide more focused ads.

Cookies are another means to track users' activity, yet they are less efficient. One could understand a Cookie as a small amount of information stored in their browser for a browsing session. There are two main categories of Cookies: first-party and third-party Cookies. Usually, the former only collects essential information, such as login information used to authenticate the user and authorise access to private resources, while the latter are often used by entities other than the web administrators.

Besides tracking user activity, trackers – and more specifically **fingerprinting** technologies – are used to prevent fraud and other malicious activities.