

IEClean Information

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IEClean Information

"Why is there an IEClean program?"

IEClean has its roots in a program called NSClean which was written for the popular Netscape web browser. During the summer of 1996, a great deal of concern regarding 'cookies' and other privacy concerns arose from a number of news reports about security issues in the popular Netscape Navigator browser. NSClean was created in June of 1996 to allow people to correct these concerns by adjusting files which Netscape wrote to the user's computer. Curiously, no one ever mentioned that Microsoft's Internet Explorer did all of the same 'bad' things.

By using our NSClean product, Netscape users could surf safely free of concern about these issues, plus could hide behind an alias which would keep snoopers on the net from discovering their true identities and allowing people to free themselves of junk mail and 'profiling.' Netscape was pretty straightforward and had no 'hooks' into the operating system as does MSIE. As a result, users who used NSClean could be assured of their privacy unless they were actually monitored with a wiretap.

Since the creation of NSClean, users of the Microsoft Internet Explorer web browser discovered that not only was MSIE doing the same things that were reported about Netscape, it did far more of them and in the minds of some experts represented a far greater threat to privacy than Netscape ever did. Users of Microsoft Internet Explorer demanded we do something similar to NSClean for them. We've done the best that can be done with IEClean.

In addition to storing cookies, history file databases, newsgroup activity recordings and disk caches, the Microsoft Internet Explorer browser keeps far more detailed records of all of the above and consumes many megabytes of space storing nearly every byte sent and received by a user while online. When people first discover the amount of media space which has been commandeered by MSIE, they are shocked.

Even more insidious in the eyes of many who used popular search engines was that when you pushed the "search" button on MSIE, you were connected immediately to Microsoft's mainframe instead of the actual search engine you thought you had connected to. Many people were concerned that Microsoft could be storing all of their searches and watching over their shoulder at all times. Microsoft recently changed this behavior of their /access/default.asp page but it left people uneasy since it had been done before. IEClean can assist greatly here by allowing you to decide where the search button sends you.

Then there are the dangers of the Microsoft "ActiveX" controls which are part of MSIE as well. "ActiveX" controls have hooks that go into the deepest recesses of the operating system kernel itself and can, in the hands of rogue programmers such as those who create viruses, cause untold damage to your computer. Microsoft claims that documented cases of rogue "ActiveX" controls causing damage to systems are "old news and of no concern."

Therefore, if you are going to use MS Internet Explorer instead of Netscape, IEClean will at least help to give you back some of your privacy but we cannot guarantee complete privacy if you use MSIE 3. We've done everything we can with what we have been able to determine in our research for this product. There are a great deal of issues that will remain beyond what IEClean can provide a degree of protection against. We want to make it clear that despite our best efforts, many potential risks remain beyond our ability to cure with this product.

Please take a minute to read through the 'Selecting checkmark items' section of this helpfile for specific explanations of the various functions which IEClean provides to enhance your privacy while using Microsoft Internet Explorer. Additional information can be found on our NSClean/IEClean web site at <http://www.wizvax.net/kevinmca/> (trailing slash is needed).

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IEClean Information

"Using IEClean"

PLEASE read the checklist information carefully before you make any selections. It is possible that there are areas of Internet Explorer you may not wish to clean for various reasons. Once IEClean cleans up a file, all information contained within is forever lost. KNOW what you're doing before you start making choices!

IEClean provides a very simple, single screen control panel. There are no complicated menus or other complex setups or structures in IEClean. IEClean provides 7 options on a checklist to permit the user to configure IEClean as desired on the fly. By merely clicking on any of the options, they will be enabled and a checkmark will appear indicating a desire to kill this item. If the checkmark next to the item is blank, then that action will not be taken.

Once the configuration is selected, a simple click of the "OK" button will cause IEClean to instantly delete the desired information from the Internet Explorer file system. To make IEClean easier to use, the settings are saved by IEClean so they will always come up in the same configuration unless you decide to change any of them. Only those functions which have a checkmark next to them will occur when you hit the "OK" button.

If you decide you don't want to delete anything, simply click on "Cancel" and no action will be taken at all. IEClean will then exit cleanly. In addition, clicking on "Cancel" leaves your checked settings as they were set before making any selections. Configuration settings are updated only when you click on "OK."

[Selecting checklist items](#)

IEClean Information

"Selecting checklist items"

The checklist buttons are associated with the cleaning of a specific file or group of files. A check mark will appear next to those that have been activated. Those items which are not checked are ignored and left alone by IEClean. Please be sure to read about each button before you select any:

Use alias User ID while online

Use alternative search host

Kill records of news site visits

Kill records in history database

Kill records in URL window list

Kill records in 'cookie file' list

Kill all your 'favorites' settings

Kill cache containing old activity

When you click on the "OK" button to perform the purge, the program will save the current checklist settings, perform the cleanup and exit automatically. Please read through the above items to determine which items you wish to set IEClean to remove for you.

IEClean Information

"Kill records of news site visits"

Internet Explorer does not have a separate database for newsgroup information, Instead, it is rolled into the global history database. To purge newsgroup data, you must purge the history database.

IEClean Information

"Kill records in history database"

This item clears out the Internet Explorer "history" file along with other database files and encryption tools. Once cleared out of data, Internet Explorer is instructed to make brand new blank copies to replace the original files and their contents. The Internet Explorer history and related files contain a complete listing of every single picture, file, site and address you've ever seen. It maintains a list of all the web sites, gopher sites, ftp sites and every local file you've looked at in your browser (including confidential internal documents).

Of all the portions of Internet Explorer that can raise the hackles of those who have actually examined the contents of the Internet Explorer history files, this one is the most potentially dangerous of all. Clearing out these files has no impact whatsoever on Internet Explorer.

IEClean Information

"Kill records in URL window list"

This item clears the contents of the cutout at the top of your screen where your start page normally appears. Internet Explorer will show you a picklist of the last several places or files you've seen.

If you have visited a site you don't want others to see in this list, you have no choice but to delete all of the contents of this window area. This button does this but does NOT delete the normal home page setting.

IEClean Information

"Kill records in 'cookie file' list"

Internet Explorer, like Netscape, maintains a file which contains "COOKIES" sent to you by web sites who want to know who you are. The "cookie" file is there for sites you call to fill up with data they want to tag your computer with, and allows them to recover any information stored within the cookie file. According to Netscape, the cookie file's purpose is to allow sites you visit to gather information about you and your habits, likes and desires.

It is further claimed that sites can only retrieve cookie information they have setup and that they somehow cannot find anything else contained in the cookie file. The author has seen little use of the cookie file, but has occasionally found data buried in it, sometimes encrypted so the net surfer cannot read what is actually in the file. The author has a belief that if the user wanted sites to have personal information, it should be asked for and the user should have the opportunity to decide whether or not to submit it.

IEClean Information

"Kill all your 'favorites' settings"

Internet Explorer maintains a bookmark database in which all bookmarks are kept. Internet Explorer calls them 'favorites' instead of 'bookmarks' as Netscape calls them.

As a result, sites that had interesting names that turned out to be porn or worse remain in the listing for posterity or for the user's children to find and then visit themselves. Selecting this option will kill ALL bookmarks in your 'favorites' file, so you should have a list of desired 'favorites' written down or saved elsewhere.

Be really sure you want to kill ALL of your 'favorite' bookmarks if you click on this.

IEClean Information

"Kill cache containing old activity"

Internet Explorer, like Netscape, creates (and uses) an entire directory of files which contain the actual text and all of the pictures from each and every web site you visit. While you are in an online session, the information contained in the cache directory is used to repaint a screen from a site you visited during this online session so the whole screen doesn't have to be loaded again from the site. This saves a considerable amount of time downloading the same screens all over again.

However - once you exit Internet Explorer, or if it gets lost among the links to other sites, or if Internet Explorer crashes, this information is useless. Internet Explorer does not have the capability (yet) to use any of this information should you exit and go back in again. The cache directory can get filled up with tens of megabytes of useless data that fills up your hard disk.

A nosy person could go into file manager and look through the various sites you've visited if they have access to your machine and can use a graphics browser to look at any or all of the pictures recorded in the cache directory as well. Internet Explorer does have an option built in to purge the contents of this directory, but it isn't all that easy to locate and use. Internet Explorer also allows you to turn off the caching, but most users find the page rebuild feature while online too useful to turn off. Turning off the caching also drastically increases the bandwidth you use on the net. Clicking here will allow you to dump the cache area whenever you want.

IEClean Information

"Having difficulty?"

Please visit <http://www.wizvax.net/kevinmca/> for more information.

IEClean Information

"Use alias User ID while online"

Most people mistakenly believe "cookies" are the culprit when they suddenly begin receiving junk email. Nope. Although cookies are often part of the process, the actual snatching of your identity comes from CGI and PERL scripts that make your browser tell them your email address.

Selecting this function writes a predetermined alias to Internet Explorer in place of your email and news usernames. This alias will be snatched instead of your real name info. You can even use the alias to post semi-anonymously to newsgroups. The alias will show publicly, but your service provider can still determine it's you should you use this feature for criminal purposes.

When you first install IEClean you will be asked not only for your real email and news ID information, you will also be given the opportunity to put in an alias of your own choosing. Uncheck this item and your normal username and email address will be sent. If you want to change it, simply select "Reconfigure" by clicking on the "close box" [-]. Handy, no?

IEClean Information

"Use alternative search host"

When Microsoft Internet Explorer starts up each time, you are whisked away to a direct connection to Redmond by your "start page." When you click on the "search" button in Internet Explorer, you are sent to an "access/allinone.asp" page instead. The unknown "ASP" filetype of the search service at Microsoft clearly indicates that this is no ordinary site. What happens is not documented by Microsoft and thus invokes fear and concern among users since Microsoft originally did not send people to the actual search engines but rather filtered them through their mainframe. Microsoft is no longer doing this due to public outcry, but it still remains a concern to many that Redmond could be watching.

Because of the original concerns of Microsoft.com's original behavior, we added a feature that allows you to point the search button directly at a site rather than going through Microsoft. Despite the changes at Microsoft, many people still prefer to designate a search site for this button so the feature remains. When you check the "Use alternative search host" option, the search site you typed into the IEClean configurator as your choice will be visited instead of going to Microsoft for searches.

You can even program the search button (in the IEClean config program) to send you to a specific web page (creating in essence a second "home page") or any other URL you wish to go to when the "search" button is hit in MSIE.

You can complete the separation from Microsoft by changing your home page settings away from the default of home.microsoft.com in Internet Explorer's settings.

To do so, run Internet Explorer and when it comes up, go to the menu on the top and click on "View." When that opens up, click on "Options" on the bottom of the popup list.

Then click on the "Navigation" tab on top of the next menu, and you will see a textbox that says "Page:" next to it on the left. If it doesn't already say "Start Page," click on the little arrow and select "Start Page" from the options.

In the textbox that is next to the word "Address:", put in the address for whatever web page you want to come up automatically when Internet Explorer starts up. If you have your own web page, you can select that! Best of all, if you have a web page of your own on your computer, you can put in the filename of that page here also!

By changing the location of your "start page," you get to decide where you want to go instead of having to go to Microsoft. By using the "alternative search" along with modifying the start page, you can disconnect from Microsoft entirely.

IEClean Information

"Kill records of news site visits"

One of the concerns of Netscape users is Netscape's ability to record the message numbers of usenet news that you have read. This allows someone to trace back and determine which messages in various newsgroups get your attention and are read.

Microsoft Internet Explorer goes way beyond this and records every single message in every newsgroup you haven't read and records the entire text and every byte of every attachment in those messages you do read. All of what you read and pass over gets recorded for posterity in huge files. If you are an avid news reader, you could give up tens of megabytes of hard disk space so MSIE can record your every word on your hard disk.

By checking this item, IEClean will clean all of the news resource files (there's a separate database file for each individual newsgroup) and free up that wasted space without cancelling your subscriptions.

