

Introducing the Platform for Privacy Preferences Project (P3P)

P3P 1.0, developed by the World Wide Web Consortium, is emerging as an industry standard providing a simple, automated way for users to gain more control over the use of personal information on Web sites they visit.

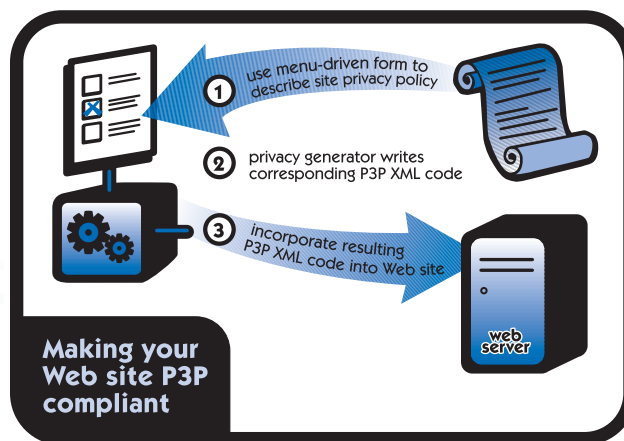
At its most basic level, P3P is a standardized set of multiple-choice questions covering all the major aspects of a Web site's privacy policies. Taken together, they present a clear snapshot of how a site handles personal information about its users.

P3P-enabled Web sites make this information available in a standard, machine-readable format. P3P-enabled browsers can "read" this snapshot automatically and compare it to the consumer's own set of privacy preferences.

P3P enhances user control by putting privacy policies where users can find them, in a form users can understand, and, most importantly, enables users to act on what they see.

In short, the P3P specification brings ease and regularity to Web users wishing to decide whether —

and under what circumstances — to disclose personal information. User confidence in online transactions increases as they are presented with meaningful information and choices about Web site privacy practices.



A First Step

The P3P standard is designed to do one job and do it well — to communicate to users, simply and automatically, a Web site's stated privacy policies, and how they compare with the user's own policy preferences. This, in itself, is a major step forward.

P3P does not set minimum standards for privacy, nor can it monitor whether sites adhere to their own stated procedures. Addressing all of the complicated, fundamental issues surrounding privacy on the Web will require the appropriate combination of technology, a legal framework and self-regulatory practices.