

The terms of service you have to accept before you can see them

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I had a few hours to kill at the airport a few years ago before my flight was ready for boarding, so I turned on my laptop and connected to the airport's wireless network. Like most pay services, the way you sign up is to fire up a web browser and go to any web site. Regardless of what site you go to, you are redirected to the "Here's how to buy a day's worth of wireless networking" site.

So far so good.

At the sign-up page, they asked for the usual information and also had a reminder that signing up for the service implies that you have read and accepted their terms of service. There was a link to their terms of service.

Except that when you clicked the link, you were redirected to the sign-up page since you haven't signed up yet.

In order to sign up, you have to accept the terms of service that you can't see until you sign up.

I didn't sign up.

Apparently I'm not the only person who's run into this Catch-22.

Pre-emptive snarky comment: "Microsoft's license agreement for a bloated, inefficient and unreliable operating system is evil, anti-competitive, and offensive." When the legal department asks me to write a product license agreement, I'll keep your feedback in mind.

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