

How to stop Google from recording where you've been

Associated Press

Even if you have "Location History" off, Google often stores your precise location. Here's how to delete those markers and some best-effort practices that keep your location as private as possible.

But there's no panacea, because simply connecting to the internet on any device flags an IP address that can be geographically mapped. Smartphones also connect to cell towers, so your carrier always knows your general location.

To prevent further tracking

For any device:

Fire up your browser and go to myactivity.google.com. (You'll need to be logged into Google) On the upper left drop-down menu, go to "Activity Controls." Turn off both "Web & App Activity" and "Location History." That should prevent precise location markers from being stored to your Google account.

Google will warn you that some of its services won't work as well with these settings off.

On iOS:

If you use Google Maps, adjust your location setting to "While Using" the app; this will prevent the app from accessing your location when it's not active. Go to Settings Privacy Location Services and from there select Google Maps to make adjustment.

In the Safari web browser, consider using a search engine other than Google. Under Settings Safari Search Engine, you can find other options like Bing or DuckDuckGo. You can turn location off while browsing by going to Settings Privacy Location Services Safari Websites, and turn this to "Never."

You can also turn Location Services off to the device almost completely from Settings Privacy Location Services. Both Google Maps and Apple Maps will still work, but they won't know where you are and won't be able to give you directions. Emergency responders will still be able to find you.

On Android:

Under the main settings icon click on "Security & location." Scroll down to "Privacy" and tap "Location." You can toggle it off for the entire device.

Use "App-level permissions" to turn off access to various apps. Unlike the iPhone, there is no setting for "While Using." You cannot turn off Google Play services, which supplies your location to other apps.

Sign in as a "guest" on your Android device by swiping down from top and tapping the downward-facing caret, then again on the torso icon.

TO DELETE PAST LOCATION TRACKING:

For any device:

On the page myactivity.google.com, look for any entry that has a location pin icon beside the word "details." Clicking on that pops up a window that includes a link that sometimes says "From your current location." Clicking on it will open Google Maps, which will display where you were at the time.

You can delete it by clicking on the navigation icon with the three stacked dots, then "Delete."

Some items will be grouped in unexpected places, such as topic names, google.com, Search, or Maps. You have to delete them item by item.