

All The Ways Facebook Tracks You And How To Stop It

Is Facebook listening to everything you say via your smartphone microphone? It's an age-old question, but you may still be curious as to whether the social network can hear your conversations.

It has happened to all of us at some point, and it sure is uncanny when you are talking about something and then open your Facebook app to find that exact item staring back at you on an advert.

I'll put this to bed now. It's just a coincidence, Facebook isn't listening to everything you say. Facebook [confirmed](#) this back in 2016.

But Facebook does know everything about you. Sometimes, it knows what you are going to say, do—or buy—even before you do. That is because Facebook collects a lot of data.

It's easy to see why there is a growing lack of trust in Facebook. The social network's been caught [leaking user data](#); it's been involved in [privacy scandals](#), and [hacked](#) multiple times. No one could blame you if you were considering [deleting the social network](#).

Even if you don't want to delete Facebook, it's a good idea to make sure you are aware of the ways it tracks you and how to stop this from happening.

How Facebook tracks you online

Facebook tracks you as you browse online. You'd have had to be hiding under a rock to have missed the latest [iOS 14.5 Apple update](#) which gives people the option to opt into tracking across other apps and websites—a model that Facebook relies on in order to serve adverts to you. It's for this reason that the social network has been in a [battle](#) with Apple for the past six months.

But [denying tracking on your iPhone](#) does not cover your activity when using Facebook on a browser. You can control this using a little-known tool launched by Facebook last year called [Off-Facebook Activity](#).

You can find your Off-Facebook Activity by going to your Account in the top right hand corner of your browser then Settings > Your Facebook Information and scroll down to Off-Facebook Activity.

Facebook describes this setting as “a summary of activity that businesses and organizations share with us about your interactions, such as visiting their apps or websites.”

This basically means that data such as your purchases will be sent back to Facebook so it can serve you with an ad offering, for example, money off your next purchase from a site you have already interacted with.

Once you’ve got over the length of the list of companies that you have interacted with, you can Manage your Off-Facebook Activity, and Clear History, so your activity history will be disconnected from your account. This doesn’t stop you from seeing ads, they will just be less targeted.

Facebook still collects data without tracking

Even without the tracking across other sites and apps, Facebook of course collects your data. It has your date of birth if you’ve entered it—or it can guess your age—it has your preferences, and it knows who you have interacted with and when. All this data is used to feed the social network’s massive data machine.

“The amount of data Facebook and the others have on us is absurd,” says Jake Moore, cybersecurity specialist at ESET. “With data being the preferred currency of current times, it is no wonder personal information is so sought after. It is used as part of a massive algorithm honed in on each and every user to profit from via analysing our movements and purchases.”

Moore advises users to limit the amount of data being handed over—for example using the Off-Facebook Activity tool and iPhone [App Tracking Transparency](#) (ATT) setting. You could even use a secondary email address to make online purchases, he advises.

So to sum up—no, Facebook isn’t listening to your conversations but it doesn’t need to. Privacy controls such as Off-Facebook Activity and Apple’s ATT can help, but remember these don’t stop Facebook from collecting your data.

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