Privacy Guide for Your Apple iOS 15 Devices

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Earlier this year, Governor DeSantis declared that Florida will "ensure the protection of Floridians' personal and private information." It certainly sounded good. The average American uses their phone more than five hours a day and checks it more than 60 times per day. Unfortunately, the privacy law which emerged suffered a number of constitutional failings and was almost immediately enjoined. The case of Netchoice v. Florida currently sits on appeal.

While the State of Florida struggles to enact effective and constitutional privacy protections for social media content, the good news is that iPhone and iPad users have some fairly robust privacy protections when they upgrade to iOS 15 (on your device, head to Settings / General / Software Update). Consider changing the following security settings:

Know What's Installed - Let's first ensure that nothing was surreptitiously installed on your device by someone else. Under Settings, scroll down past "TV Provider" and make sure you can identify every app listed. Scroll back up to General / VPN & Device Management and ensure there is nothing unusual there as well.

Hide Your IP Address in Safari - Websites can identify your device through its IP address. Apple now allows you to hide that information. Go to Settings / Safari / Hide IP Address and select "tracker only."

Only You Can Access Your Device - You likely open your device through Face ID. Make sure no one else has programmed their face to allow access to your device. Head to Settings / Face & Passcode and ensure there is no "alternative appearance" set.

Turn All of These Off - Unless you have a specific need for any of the following settings, head to Settings / Privacy and turn off Nearby Interactions, Speech Recognition, and Research Sensor & Usage Data. Under "Local Network," turn off any app that does not need to connect to other devices (e.g., printers and IOT devices are fine but turn off non-essentials like browsers and social media apps).

Stop With the Tracking - Under Settings / Privacy, select Location Services and scroll down to System Services. Turn off Location-Based Suggestions, Significant Locations, Analytics, and Routing & Traffic. Back under Privacy, select Tracking and make sure the toggle is off. Finally, also under Privacy, scroll down to Analytics & Improvements and Apple Advertising and turn those off.

Stop Apps from Tracking Your Location - Back under Privacy / Location Services, go down the list of apps and, unless it is critical, set them to "never" or "while using."

App Privacy Report - Your device will maintain a 7-day log of which apps access various sensors and your camera and whether the apps are sending out that information. Start the log by going to Setting / Privacy / Record App Activity. Revisit in a few days.

Mail Privacy Protection - Marketers send you emails with small pixels which reveal when you open their emails. Block that information (as well as your IP address) by going to Settings / Mail / Privacy protection and toggling both switches on.

Access to Your Camera, Microphone, Bluetooth - Under Settings / Privacy, review Camera, Microphone, and Bluetooth, check which apps have access to see, hear, and connect. Many apps overreach (e.g., why does LinkedIn need access to your microphone?). Turn these off. If the app really needs access later, it will notify you.

Hide Your Health Info - Under Settings / Health, check the listed apps to ensure you want to share your information. If not, tap "Health" and then delete all data. Research studies should be set to "none."

Stop Google Maps from Recording You - Do not let Google Maps record everywhere you go. In the app, hit your image in the upper right corner, select "Your data in Maps," and then set Location History to "Paused." Review the other privacy settings on that page as well.

Are You at Your Desk? - Under Settings / Mail / Signature, turn off "sent from my iPhone" (also, we're not amused by your pardon-my-fat-fingers byline). Why tell people that you are out? Also, when you reply to an email, the title will be "RE:" if you are on a computer but "Re:" when it is a mobile device. If you want to appear to be at your desk, just capitalize the "e" in "RE" in the title of your email.

Don't Reveal Your Location in Photos - Under Settings / Privacy / Location Services, toggle Camera to "never."

Is Someone Tracking You or Reading Your Texts? Under Settings / Privacy / Location Services / Share My Location, switch off the toggle unless you intend to always share your location. Back under Settings, scroll down to Messages and make sure Send and Receive is set to your phone number and no other email or device. Turn off Messages on all devices except your iPhone.

Don't Send Read Receipts - There is no reason someone should know when you read a text. Under Settings / Messages, turn off Send Read Receipts.

Are Your Deleted Photos Really Deleted? - Open the Photos app, select Albums, and scroll down to Hidden and Recently Deleted to manage unwanted images.

Keep Your Devices Together - If you always have your iPhone and iPad together, you can get a notice if they are separated or lost. On your phone, go to the FindMy app, select Devices, and then select the companion device. Under Notifications, select "Notify When Left Behind."

Set an Apple ID Recovery Contact - Set an emergency contact if you are locked out of your Apple ID. Head to Settings / [your name] / Password & Security / Account Recovery / Add Recovery Contact and follow the steps.

This article is the sixth time we have covered iOS privacy settings in this column since iOS 6 in 2012. While some of the foregoing steps have not changed significantly, Florida lawyers are tasked with the ethical responsibility of understanding the "risks associated with the use of technology." Comment to Rule 4-1.1. Keep your data, and your client's data, as safe as possible.

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