
Digital Defense

*Secure practices for the coming tech
apocalypse*

Google Accounts

There are a lot of hidden information caches attached to any Google account. Go through these one by one to make sure you're not leaving extra info that you don't want out there. Understand that if your account is compromised, anything in the associated services is compromised as well. It's pretty hard to crack a password on Google accounts but there are plenty of non-cracking ways that someone might try and access an account so plan for a worst-case scenario and minimize what can be found.

Account Settings & Info

- This doesn't cover everything! You may have other active services storing info in their own ways. To get rid of parts of Google you don't need, check out <https://myaccount.google.com/deleteservices>
 - If you want to keep any of the things you've given to Google, head to <https://takeout.google.com/> and you should be able to download just about any of the things you've given them. Save them locally to your device, an external hard drive, or if you've got cloud storage that you're comfortable having that information, move it there as a file. Now you're good to get rid of it all!
 - Contacts: Your contacts are stored at <https://contacts.google.com/> and in order to efficiently mass-delete them, hit "switch to the old version" in the sidebar. Now you should be able to select all and delete. Check "frequently contacted" and "other contacts" on this page as well – there are usually additional contacts stored there to delete as well. One thing to know here is that as you send messages from a Gmail account, your "frequently contacted" will have to be regularly deleted even if you're not storing the contact actively. After deleting, empty the trash.
 - Pictures: Go to <https://photos.google.com/> and start deleting. Deleting pictures in bulk is weirdly irritating through this service. Hold down shift while clicking the checkbox on the first picture. Let go of the shift key. Scroll down with the on-page date bar just inside the browser scroll bar NOT the browser scroll bar itself. Hold down shift again and click the last picture – they should all be selected and now you can select delete from the menu up top. After deleting, empty the trash.
 - Gmail: You can mass select and mass delete email pretty easily through Gmail – it's harder to do through the "Inbox" service, so if you use that go to the main Gmail page instead. Make sure that you check your sent mail, archived mail (go to "all mail"), spam, any folders, and any saved chats as well as your inbox. After deleting, empty the trash. This should be done regularly to prevent new information from becoming available.
 - Drive: Go to <https://drive.google.com/drive/my-drive> and start deleting! You can use a shift + click to select a range of files including folders. The name will turn blue when it's selected, similar to pictures. Select all the files, delete them, then empty the trash. Check "backups" and "shared with me" to make sure there's nothing there that could be storing extra info. Check "computers" to make sure you don't have Drive syncing with something you don't know about.
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- Activity: Check what's getting recorded about your activity and delete it at <https://myactivity.google.com> If there's anything on here, it's something that Google has been tracking about you. Go to "delete activity by" and select "all time" in the date. Then, in the sidebar, go to "other google activity" and go step by step through each different section to make sure information is removed. Return to the main activity page and select "activity controls" in the sidebar. Go through and disable all of these tracking services. Maps can be particularly freaky to realize how much data they've been saving.
 - Account settings: Go to <https://myaccount.google.com/> and go through the security check and privacy controls to make sure you're protected and not giving Google any extra data.

Notes on Androids

- The main thing to understand is that your phone wants to give all of your information to Google. That shit is trying to sabotage you all the time.

To comply with the EU Privacy Laws we're bound to inform you that some third party services used on some of our blogs (like Youtube) could use cookies

tracking – map searches, locations, contacts, photos, predictive search, etc.

- Every time you put in a contact, it's going to try to give it to Google. Make sure you're looking at the menu in the top corner when you add a contact and that it says "phone" instead of an email address.

The rest of it

- Check to see if you have a Chrome account. If so, we strongly recommend clearing it out of all data and then deleting it. There are better ways to store bookmarks, saved passwords, etc.
- A last note on Google – there are ways in which it's still the most effective search engine and one we need to use when doing deep dives. Many others are effective for most casual use, so set your default search engine as a non-tracking one like DuckDuckGo. Make using Google a conscious choice and not an unrealized part of daily web browsing when we don't need it.