

Living Safely

with disabilities and special health needs

How to Protect Privacy on Apps

It's important to know about privacy settings on the apps on your devices. Before installing an app on your device, here are some things you can do to protect your privacy.

To reduce the risk of installing potentially harmful apps, download apps only from official app stores, such as your device's manufacturer or the app store link on your cell phone or tablet. Some apps might be very well known and used by a lot of people. These well known apps might be more likely to be reliable and safe.

You can look up reliable information about the app and its developer before installing. If you are not sure, ask someone you know and trust who might know more about apps and technology. You might want to download an app that person has used and recommends for you.

Know what information the app will be able to access. Before you download an app, read the app's privacy policy to see how your data will be used or if your data will be shared. Is the policy vague about how the app will share your data? If it is, or if you're not comfortable with how your information could be shared, you might want to find another app.

When downloading an app, you may be asked for permission to access your camera and microphone. You may be asked to give permission when you first download the app, or at the time the app first tries to access that information or feature. You may also be asked for personal information such as your contact list, your location, and photos on your device. This information may be needed for an app to function. This information can also be shared with other companies. Pay close attention to the permissions the app requests. For example, does it really need to access your location or photos to do its job? If not, make sure you do not give the permission.

If an app is already on your cellphone or tablet, there are still some things you can do to protect your privacy. Go to your app's settings and review the permissions. Make sure the app does not have access to information or features it does not need. Turn off unnecessary permissions.

Some apps request lots of permissions that are not needed for the app's function. Consider deleting apps that need a lot of permissions. Pay special attention to apps that have access to your contact list, camera, storage, location, and microphone.

Some apps have access to your device's location services. If an app needs access to your location data to function, think about limiting the access to only when the app is in use.

Don't automatically sign in to apps using your social network account. Signing in to an app with your social network account, gives the app and the social network account access to your information. It is safer to sign in to an app using a user ID or email address and a unique password.

continued on the next page

How to Protect Privacy on Apps – Continued from previous page.

Make sure to keep apps updated. App developers update the apps to add safety features. Install app updates as soon as they are released.

To avoid unnecessary data collection, if you are not using an app, delete it.

We value the expertise of our partners in safety who have demonstrated their commitment to inclusive healthy communities. Portions of this resource have been adapted from the Federal Trade Commission (www.ftc.gov).

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This initiative was funded in part by an Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant from the Division of Disability Services, New Jersey Department of Human Services.

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