

# Ad trackers and surveillance

What is wrong with them, and what you can do

## THE QUESTION

Who is watching what you read, search and tap?

## THE PROMISE

Plain facts, and steps you can take today.

## OUR JOB

See the trackers, understand the harms, and choose tools and habits that fit you.

Browser

Search

Apps

Habits

# How tracking works

## 1. Identify

A cookie, a device detail or an advertising ID marks you



## 2. Collect

Pages and apps send what you view, tap and where you are



## 3. Combine

Ad companies and data brokers join the pieces into a profile



## 4. Use

Ads, prices and offers are chosen for the profile

- Cookies and tracking pixels from outside companies
- Fingerprinting: telling browsers apart by their details
- Tracker code (SDKs) built into apps
- The advertising ID on a phone
- Data brokers who buy, combine and sell profiles

**Many free services are paid for by advertising that runs on data about you.**

# What is **wrong** with it

## Privacy

Detailed profiles of your habits, interests and location, built without a clear choice.

## Security

Ads can carry scams and malware. The FBI has advised using an ad blocker for search ads.

## Manipulation

Messages aimed at moments of worry or weakness, and offers that differ by person.

## Little control

Consent pop-ups and hidden settings make real choice hard.

## Young people

Data collected from children and teens, often with weak protections.

## Everyday cost

Heavier pages, slower loading and more battery and data use.

**Not every ad or use of data is harmful.** The problem is the scale, the secrecy and the lack of choice.

# What to watch for in the demo

## On the web

- Which requests go to outside companies
- What each one learns about you
- What a blocker stops, and what it misses
- What can break when you block more
- What a search reveals

## On your phone

- Trackers found in an app's code
- Permissions an app asks for
- Why a report is not proof of activity
- The advertising ID and how to reset it
- Questions to ask before you install

**Predict:** when you open a news article, how many of its requests go to companies other than the site itself?

Write down a number. We'll check it on an example page in the lab.