

Your smart TV is spying on you. Here are step-by-step instructions to stop it

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Those smart TVs that sold for unheard of low prices over the holidays come with a catch. The price is super low, but the manufacturers get to monitor what you're watching and report back to third parties, for a fee.

Or, in some cases, companies like Amazon (with its Fire TV branded sets from Toshiba and Insignia) and TCL, with its branded Roku sets, look to throw those same personalized, targeted ads at you that you get when visiting Facebook and Google.

It doesn't have to be this way. You have the controls to opt out. Within just a few clicks, you can stop the manufacturers from snooping on you in the living room.

Amazon-branded 'Fire TV Edition' sets

Go to Settings and Preferences, where you have several categories to uncheck. Select "Privacy Settings," and make sure "Device Usage Data," "Collect App and Over-the-Air data" and "Interest-based ads" are turned off. (And be sure to go back and check your settings often. We own one of these sets and had "interest-based ads" turned off. When we checked Wednesday, it had somehow clicked back to "on.")

Amazon will urge you to turn interest-based ads back on, saying that the apps will be instructed not use your information to "build profiles" for advertising purposes or "target you with interest-based ads. It only sounds like a great deal.

TCL/Roku

TCL makes branded Roku TVs with software also used in sets by Hisense, Hitachi, Insignia, Philips, RCA and Sharp.

Turn off ACR by going to Settings, then Privacy, and "Smart TV Experience." To disable ACR, make sure all the options there are unchecked, notes CNET.

LG

In the menu, click to Settings, which brings you to All Settings, and find your way to General. The feature to look for here is LivePlus, which is what LG calls the ACR technology that monitors your viewing. This is the one you want to turn off.

Samsung

On newer sets, go for Settings in the menu, then Support, then Terms & Policies. From there, CNET suggests "Choose Viewing Information Services" and unchecking the ACR tab. Personalized ads are in Service Privacy Notice, where you uncheck Enable to hopefully stop them in their tracks.

Sony

Consumer Reports notes that ACR is turned on during setup of the TV, via agreements with Sony, which makes the TV; Google, which provides the AndroidTV operating system; and Samba TV, a company that gathers analytics on viewers' habits that advertisers can use for targeted ad campaigns.

On Sony TVs, you'll have to go back to the setup, available within Settings, to turn off ACR.

Vizio

For Vizio sets, select System, click on "Reset & Admin" and opt for "Viewing Data" to opt out of ACR.

And there's always a simpler, incredibly effective step. If you don't want your viewing tracked, just turn the WiFi off on the set altogether and just rely on your cable TV signal.

But what fun is that? You won't be able to say "Alexa, turn off the TV" or "Hey Google, open Netflix."

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