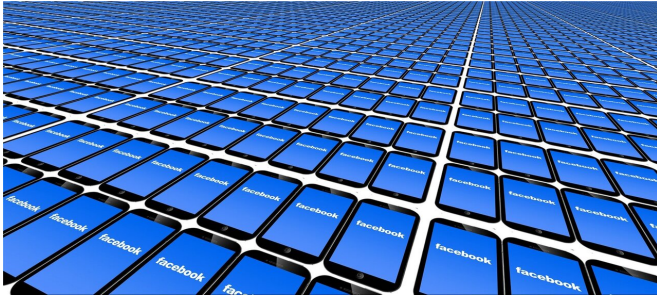


Facebook defends tracking your every move—even if the app isn't on

10 September 2019, by Jefferson Graham



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Anticipating questions from users about why they're being tracked by Facebook as Google (Android) and Apple (iOS) release new operating systems, the social network took to a blog post Monday to explain its thinking.

The Facebook app follows your every move, even if the app isn't on, and the social network isn't shy about that either.

Location tracking "helps improve ads and keep you and the Facebook community safe," wrote Paul McDonald, engineering director, location platform. "Features like Find Wi-Fi and Nearby Friends use precise location even when you're not using the app to make sure that alerts and tools are accurate and personalized for you."

The social network tracks us on mobile phones if we give permission, meaning the social network knows where you are, even with the app closed. It leaves "cookie" data on our devices for tracking "to create personalized products that are unique and relevant to you."

On permissions, Facebook doesn't entice you to allow non-stop tracking even with the app closed. It gets us to grant permission in exchange for using a feature. For instance, after posting a photo on

Facebook-owned Instagram recently, this reporter was urged to "Turn on Location Services," to automatically select the city tag. And with that, Facebook had the tracking green light.

In the new version of Google's Android 10 operating system, Facebook admits that users now get more visibility information and control over apps getting their location data, while on iOS 13, which is expected to be released next week, they will get reminders about which apps have been allowed to access location information when they're not using an app and how many times each app has accessed it.

On iOS, users are given three options for location share: always, only when the app is in use or never. For iOS 13, Apple added an "allow once" option and notifications about when apps like Facebook are grabbing at your data.

In the post, McDonald suggests that the user can control whether your device shares precise location information with Facebook via the Location Services settings on phone or tablet.

However, he freely admits that even if you turn off Location Services, Facebook can still grab at your data. "We may still understand your [location](#) using things like check-ins, events and information about your internet connection."

Privacy experts we've spoken to say that if you don't want to be tracked but still want to use Facebook, don't use the app. Log on via the mobile web browser instead.

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APA citation: Facebook defends tracking your every move—even if the app isn't on (2019, September 10) retrieved 16 September 2019 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2019-09-facebook-defends-tracking-moveeven-app.html>

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