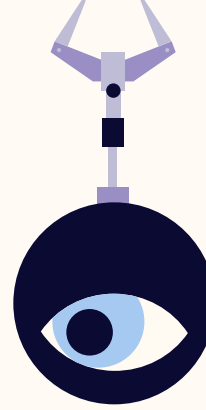


Be a hero for children.



HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

Kids should be safe in school, whether that's online or in person.

While not intended to be a comprehensive list, here are some steps that you can take to help protect the privacy of children or students in their online classroom. This guide has four parts.

What happened, and how were children affected?

Governments around the world endorsed the use of education technologies (EdTech) during Covid-19 school closures. When we investigated more than 150 EdTech products recommended by 49 countries, more than 140 engaged in data practices that may have risked or infringed on children's rights.

Many EdTech products surveilled children, harvested their personal data, and sent it to advertising tech companies. In most cases, children, parents, and teachers were kept in the dark.

To learn more:

Check the EdTech product recommended by your government for children's learning.

Read the [report](#).

What can do I right away to help protect children's privacy online?

Here are three things that you can do, for free, to help protect children's privacy online right away. Each step should take approximately five minutes.

*Note: This guide is accurate as of May 2022, and settings options in Android and iOS may change over time. If you're not seeing the exact options we've listed here, please search online for "How to disable ad tracking" and "How to disable location-based ad tracking."

1. Turn off ad tracking on a child's phone or tablet.

Why it helps to protect children's privacy online

To figure out who people are on the internet, companies tag each person with a string of numbers and letters that acts as a unique identifier: it points to a single child or their device, and it does not change. Some persistent identifiers are built only to be used for advertising. On phones, this is called an Advertising ID.

There are ways to help prevent the tagging of a child and their device with an advertising ID. Doing so will make it more difficult for companies to track and identify a child, over time and across different apps installed on their phone, for advertising purposes.

How to turn off ad tracking (Android phones):

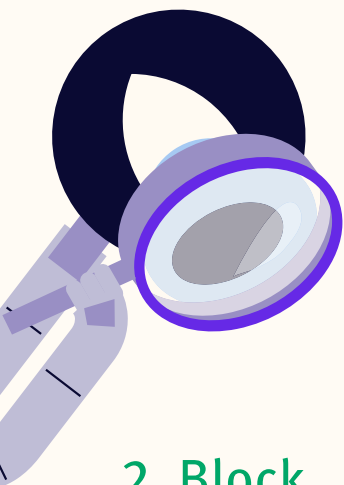
1. Open the Settings app.
2. Go to Privacy, then go to Ads.
3. Click on Reset your advertising ID.
4. Turn on Opt out of Ads Personalization.

How to turn off ad tracking (iPhones):

1. Open the Settings app.
2. Go to Privacy, then go to Apple Advertising.
3. Turn off Personalized Ads.

Also (iPhones continued):

1. Open the Settings app.
2. Go to Privacy, then go to Tracking.
3. Turn off Allow Apps to Request to Track.



2. Block trackers on websites used by a child.

Why it helps to protect children's privacy online

Human Rights Watch found that most of the children's educational websites it examined inserted as many tracking technologies on personal devices as do the world's most popular websites aimed at adults. That is, children appear just as likely to be surveilled in their virtual classrooms as adults shopping in the world's largest virtual malls, if not more so.

These trackers follow children long after they leave their virtual classrooms, outside of school hours, deep into their private lives, and over time.

How to help protect children's privacy online:

Consider installing privacy-focused browser extensions for the web browsers used by children. These are free add-on features that make it difficult for companies to track children online. Once these are installed, they run in the background without any further action required by the user.

Privacy-focused browser extensions include:

- Privacy Badger (Chrome, Firefox): Built by the Electronic Frontier Foundation, it stops advertisers and other trackers from tracking people's behaviors on the web.
- uBlock Origin (Chrome, Firefox, Edge): It blocks trackers from collecting users' data and following them across the internet. It can also block ads and malicious websites.

For Safari:

1. Open the Settings app on your iPhone or Mac.
2. Go to Safari, and scroll down to the Privacy & Security section.
3. Turn on Prevent Cross-Site Tracking.
4. Turn off Privacy Preserving Ad Measurement.
5. Go to Hide IP Address, then select From Trackers.

3. Help prevent others from knowing a child's location.

Why it helps to protect children's privacy online

Information about a child's physical location also reveals powerfully intimate details about their life far beyond their coordinates. Mobile phones have the ability to find and track a child's precise physical location over time, including when and how long they were in any given place. Once collected, these data points can reveal such sensitive information as where a child lives and where they go to school, trips between divorced parents' homes, and visits to a doctor's office specializing in childhood cancer.

How to turn off location tracking:

Go to an app's permissions to turn off the location services.

Android:

1. Open the Settings app.
2. Go to Apps.
3. Each app can be clicked to control whether it can access a child's location.

iPhone:

1. Open the Settings app.
2. Go to Privacy, then go to Location Services.
3. Each app can be clicked to control whether it can access a child's location.

Additional resources

[The Data Detox Kit](#): Built by the NGO Tactical Tech, it's an easy-to-use guide with everyday steps to control digital privacy, security, and well-being. Even better: it's offered in 36 languages.

What can I ask schools or districts to do to help protect children's privacy in online classrooms?

1. Who is responsible for student data privacy?
2. What is each EdTech product doing with children's data privacy?
 - What data does it collect from children, how does it collect children's data, and with whom does it share children's data?
3. Has anyone checked if these EdTech products are safe for children to use?
 - Did the school or district conduct, or rely on, a technical privacy evaluation or a child rights impact assessment of each EdTech product before deciding on their use?
 - Did the school or district pay for licenses or enter into contracts with companies? If so, what safeguards were required of companies to take to protect children and their data?
 - OR: Is the school or district using these products for free? If so, what safeguards did you take to protect our children and their data?
4. How is the school or district protecting children's data privacy?
 - What measures are in place to protect against tech companies collecting, using, and sharing children's data, for reasons that have nothing to do with education?
5. Do parents and teachers have any say in how a child's/student's data is collected, shared, and used?



What's the biggest thing I can do to protect children's privacy online?

Governments can protect our kids by passing modern child data protection laws.

By demanding protections for how children's data is handled, we can help defend children from being surveilled in online classrooms by actors who may not have children's best interests at heart.

Ask your lawmakers to act now.

Here's a sample message you can use to call or email your lawmaker:

Subject: Protect our kids. Pass modern child data protection laws, today.

Message:

As your constituent, I ask you to pass modern child data protection laws for our country.

When governments endorsed the use of education technologies (EdTech) during Covid-19 school closures, I thought that our kids were safe in school online.

But when Human Rights Watch investigated more than 150 EdTech products, recommended by 49 of the world's most populated countries, they found that most weren't safe for kids to use.

Many EdTech products surveilled children, harvested their personal data, and sent it to advertising tech companies. And we – children, parents, and teachers – were often kept in the dark.

Children depend on technology to learn, more than ever. As more children spend increasing amounts of their childhood online, their reliance on the connected world and digital services that enable their education will continue long after the end of the pandemic.

Governments and companies alike need laws to make sure that they respect children's rights, in both the physical and the online world. Enforcement of these laws will hold them accountable if they fail to do so.

I ask you to act now, and to pass modern child data protection laws. Children are priceless, not products.

Sincerely,

[Name]

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