



Digital safety guide

iPhone privacy & security



The settings that keep your phone, your Apple Account, and your whereabouts to yourself. Go one section at a time — no need to do it all at once.

Before you start

Your iPhone	Written for iOS 26 and iOS 27. To check yours: Settings › General › About .
Find Settings	Open the Settings app. Your name at the top is your Apple Account (formerly Apple ID). Each app's own settings are under Apps , near the bottom.
Can't find it?	Menus move. Use the search bar at the top of Settings.

✓ Do

Install updates as soon as they arrive (page 2).

Use a passcode of six or more digits, plus Face ID or Touch ID.

Keep Find My iPhone on (page 2).

Check which apps can see your location and photos (page 4).

✗ Don't

Type your passcode where others can watch. A thief who learns it can do far more damage.

Approve a sign-in or share a code you didn't ask for. Apple won't call you for one.

Accept AirDrops from strangers. Set AirDrop to Contacts Only (page 6).

Tap links in surprise texts or emails, even ones that look like Apple.



01 Update and lock your iPhone

Updates

Settings › General › Software Update › Automatic Updates

Turn everything on. Updates close security holes criminals already know how to use. If your iPhone stops getting them, it's time to plan a replacement.

Passcode

Settings › Face ID & Passcode

Use six digits or more; **Passcode Options › Custom Alphanumeric Code** is the strongest. Add Face ID or Touch ID so you rarely have to type it in public.

Stolen Device Protection

On the same screen. It's on by default since iOS 26.4, but check. Away from familiar places, it requires your face or fingerprint, not just your passcode, before big changes.

Lock screen

Also on that screen, under **Allow Access When Locked**, turn off anything you don't need from the lock screen, such as Siri. There's no need to turn Siri off entirely.

Erase Data

Optional: erases the iPhone after 10 wrong passcodes. Skip it if grandkids play with your phone.

02 Turn on Find My

Find My iPhone

Settings › your name › Find My › Find My iPhone

Turn on **Find My iPhone**, **Find My network**, and **Send Last Location**. Lost it? Sign in at icloud.com/find from any computer to play a sound, mark it lost, or erase it.



03 Protect your Apple Account

Settings › your name › Sign-In & Security

Two-factor authentication

It should already say **On**. If it doesn't, turn it on.

Recovery Contact

Add someone you trust who can help you get back in if you're ever locked out.

Legacy Contact

Choose someone who can reach your photos and data after you pass away.

Passwords

The built-in **Passwords** app creates and saves strong passwords for you. Check its **Security** list for reused or leaked ones.

Surprise sign-ins

If an "Allow sign-in" message or a code pops up that you didn't ask for, tap **Don't Allow**. Apple will never call to ask for it.

04 Run Safety Check

Settings › Privacy & Security › Safety Check

Shows who and what can see your information, such as shared locations, photos, and apps with access, and lets you cut anything off. **Emergency Reset** is there for anyone leaving an unsafe relationship.

🔒 *What about Lockdown Mode?*

Lockdown Mode, further down in Privacy & Security, is built for people facing targeted attacks, such as journalists and activists. It switches off many everyday features, so most people don't need it.



05 Control location and permissions

Settings › Privacy & Security › Location Services

Apps	Set each app to Never or While Using the App . Turn off Precise Location for apps that just need your town, like weather.
Camera	Set Camera to Never so new photos don't record where they were taken. When sharing a photo, tap Options at the top of the share screen and turn off Location .
Significant Locations	Under System Services › Significant Locations , turn it off and clear its history.
Who sees where you are	Open the Find My app and tap People to see who can see your location. iOS 27 also lets you pause sharing with someone until the end of the day.
Visited Places	If you turned on Visited Places in Apple Maps, you can clear it and switch it off: Maps › Places › Visited Places › Clear History .
App permissions	Back in Privacy & Security , review Contacts, Photos, Camera, and Microphone. Turn on App Privacy Report , at the bottom, to see what apps actually use.
Camera and mic	A green dot at the top of the screen means the camera is in use; orange means the microphone. If you see one you can't explain, check that app's permissions.

Why it matters

A photo taken at home can carry your home's exact map coordinates. Most social media sites strip that out when you post, but photos sent by email, text, or a shared link often keep it. Setting Camera to Never solves it at the source.



06 Limit tracking and ads

Settings › Privacy & Security

SETTING	CHOOSE
TRACKING Allow Apps to Request to Track Apps can no longer ask to follow you across other apps and websites.	Off
APPLE ADVERTISING Personalized Ads	Off
ANALYTICS & IMPROVEMENTS Share iPhone Analytics	Off

07 Tune Safari and Mail

Settings › Apps › Safari

SETTING	CHOOSE
Fraudulent Website Warning	On
Prevent Cross-Site Tracking	On
Hide IP Address	From Trackers
ADVANCED Advanced Tracking and Fingerprinting Protection	All Browsing
Clear History and Website Data	Now and then

Settings › Apps › Mail › Privacy Protection

Turn on **Protect Mail Activity**, so senders can't see when you open their email or where you are. It doesn't encrypt your mail.



08 Screen out scam calls and texts

Calls

Settings › Apps › Phone › Screen Unknown Callers

Choose **Ask Reason for Calling**: your iPhone asks unknown callers who they are before it rings. Or choose **Silence** to send them straight to voicemail.

Texts

Settings › Apps › Messages

Turn on **Screen Unknown Senders** to move texts from numbers you don't know into their own list.

09 Manage wireless connections

Wi-Fi and Bluetooth

Switching them off in Control Center only disconnects you for a while. To turn them fully off, use **Settings › Wi-Fi** or **Settings › Bluetooth**. Keep Bluetooth on if you use hearing aids or a watch.

Public Wi-Fi

Much safer than it used to be, since most sites now encrypt your connection (look for the lock). For banking, your cell data is still the safer choice.

AirDrop

Settings › General › AirDrop

Choose **Contacts Only**, or **Receiving Off** if you don't use it.

Want a hand with this?

We'll walk through every setting in this guide with you, at your pace.

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