

How to Stop Google from Quietly Recording Your Voice

June 15, 2024 - You are probably not aware of it but there is a hidden feature within Google accounts that allows the tech giant to quietly record users' voices. Google saves audio recordings from web and app activities, as well as verbal interactions with Search, Assistant, and Maps. The company states that these recordings help "develop and improve its audio recognition technologies." However, this practice should raise privacy concerns with just about everyone.

Google claims that it only listens to snippets of conversations to pick up "wake words" such as "Hey Google," enabling it to respond to voice commands. The company claims that it doesn't use this feature to route advertising to users based on what they say and that users can turn the feature off. While they claim that its use is voluntary, that's hardly the case for anyone who doesn't know they do this. And it isn't something that they advertise.

Despite the company's assurances, the potential for misuse remains. Cybercriminals could potentially access these recordings if they manage to infiltrate your account, posing a risk to your personal information and privacy. This concern is not unfounded, as smart devices and assistant technologies have increasingly become targets for hackers.

How to Turn Off Voice Recording

To protect your privacy, you can disable this feature by following these steps:

1. Open the Google app on your smartphone.
2. Manage your Google account by tapping on your profile picture or initial at the top right corner.
3. Select "manage your Google account."
4. Access data & privacy settings by going to the "data & privacy" tab.
5. Adjust web & app activity settings by scrolling down to the "history settings" section.
6. Click on "web & app activity."
7. Turn off voice and audio activity:
8. You will see a blue checkmark next to the "web & app activity" section. Click on it and scroll down to find the "voice and audio activity" setting. Uncheck the box to disable this feature.

Disabling this setting stops Google from saving audio recordings from interactions with Search, Assistant, and Maps. However, previously saved audio will not be deleted automatically; you can delete it manually if desired.

Apart from turning off voice recording, here are other steps you can take to safeguard your privacy:

Verify Apps: Only download apps from official stores and verify their legitimacy to avoid malware.

Review App Permissions: Regularly check and adjust app permissions to limit access to your microphone and other sensitive data.

Delete Voice Request History: Periodically delete your voice request history to prevent a memory bank of your

Use a VPN: A Virtual Private Network (VPN) can help encrypt your information and protect it from third-party access.

Keep Software Updated: Ensure your devices and applications are up-to-date with the latest security patches.

In conclusion, while Google and other tech companies assert that their assistant devices only listen for commands, the potential privacy risks cannot be ignored. By taking proactive steps to manage your settings and protect your data, you can better safeguard your privacy in the digital age.

by Jim Malmberg

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