

# Opt out of unwanted services<sup>x</sup>

If your inbox is clogged with unasked-for mail and you're worried your data is being shared without your consent, **Jonathan Parkyn** shows you how to find out what you've been opted into and get opted out

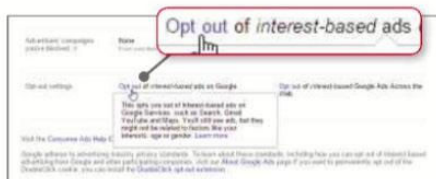
## Opt out of Google Ads

### Why am I opted in?

Arguably the world's most successful advertising company, Google lets you use lots of services for free. The catch is that you're automatically opted into a bunch of ad-related arrangements that use data about you, your personal interests and browsing history to target you with online ads.

### How do I opt out?

You can't opt out of Google's online advertising completely (otherwise the entire internet may possibly implode), but you can opt out of the company's interest-based ads, so you're no longer plagued by adverts for a pair of trainers you nearly bought two years ago, for example. Head to [bit.ly/google373](http://bit.ly/google373) and sign in with your Google account. Look for 'Opt-out settings' and click the links to opt out of both 'interest-based ads on Google' and 'interest-based Google ads across the web'.



## Opt out of annoying mailing lists

### Why am I opted in?

Is your email inbox flooded with unnecessary newsletters, notices and pestering promotions? It may be your own doing. Perhaps you bought goods online or registered with a website and inadvertently overlooked an easy-to-miss checkbox that said something along the lines of "tick here if you'd rather we didn't spam you incessantly with stuff you don't want from now until the end of time".

### How do I opt out?

You could flag it all up as junk within your email program or webmail service,



so future messages are automatically diverted to your spam folder (where they probably belong). If you'd rather they didn't arrive at all, you should find an 'unsubscribe' or similar link at the bottom of the message. And watch out for those tickboxes next time you sign up to anything with your email address.

## Opt out of shared endorsements

### Why am I opted in?

When you sign up for Google+, by default you let Google personalise targeted ads by allowing the use of your username, profile photo, and comments and +1s you've made as implied endorsements. It means your face and personal data may crop up in ads on your friends' computers when they browse the web, which is just creepy.

### How do I opt out?

Sign into your Google account, then head to the Shared Endorsements page at [bit.ly/shared373](http://bit.ly/shared373). Scroll down and untick the box next to 'Based upon my activity, Google may show my name and profile photo in shared endorsements that appear in ads', then click Save and Continue.



## Opt out of online tracking

### Why am I opted in?

Google isn't the only company that opts you into a load of web-tracking options.

Facebook, for example, makes its ads 'better' for its users by tailoring them to things you've shared on your timeline, or to posts and pages that you've liked.

### How do I opt out?

If you don't want Facebook and other companies harvesting information about your web activity and using it for advertising purposes, visit the European Interactive Digital Advertising Alliance's UK page ([bit.ly/choices373](http://bit.ly/choices373)), which will scan your PC for cookies. When it's done, click 'Off' for Facebook, along with any other companies that you don't want tracking you.



## Stop Facebook sharing data about you

### Why am I opted in?

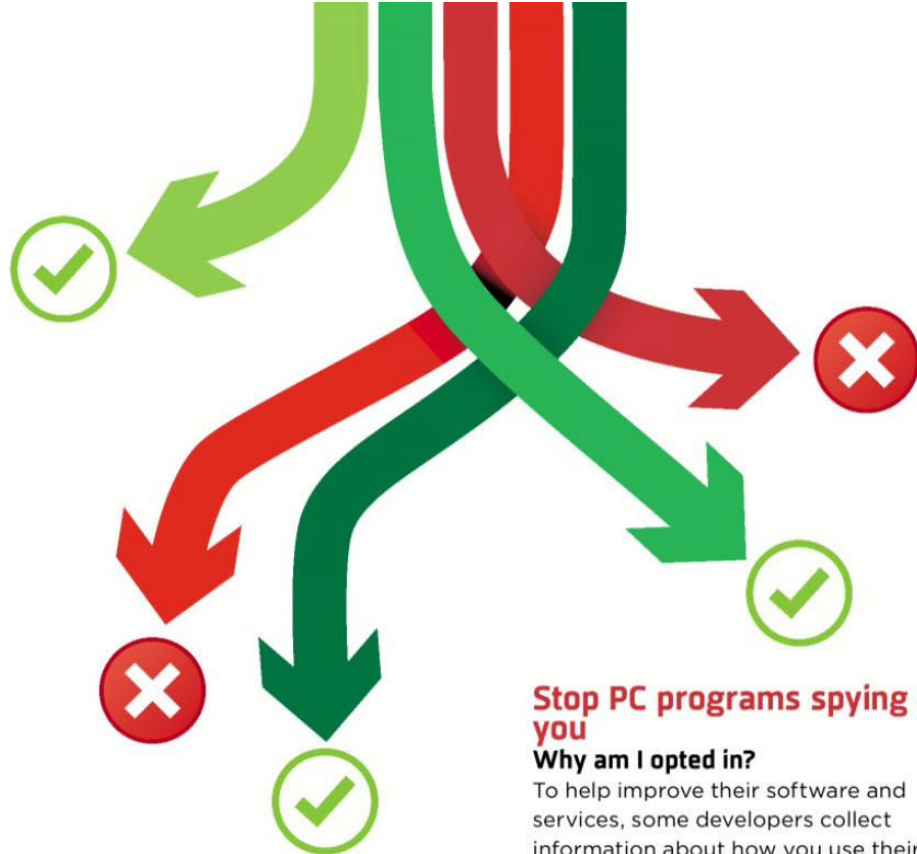
Social networks are all about sharing data with others, but you need to be careful who those 'others' are. Facebook, for example, makes some data about you public. If you're concerned, you may want to opt out of any settings that could impinge on your privacy.

### How do I opt out?

Sign in at [facebook.com](http://facebook.com), then click the down arrow and choose Settings. Check







your options under Privacy and 'Timeline and Tagging'. For example, you can stop your timeline from appearing in search-engine results by going to the Privacy options, clicking Edit next to the entry under 'Who can look me up?' and unticking 'Let other search engines link to your timeline'.

## Opt out of ads and more on your phone or tablet

### Why am I opted in?

By default, both Android and Apple collect lots of data about their mobile users and use it for their own nefarious purposes (advertising again, mainly, and analysing user behaviour). You may not feel happy about having an intelligence-gathering agent effectively spying on you from within your own pocket.

### How do I opt out?

In iOS, tap Settings, then Privacy. Under 'Diagnostics & Usage', tap Don't Send.



Go back to the main Privacy options page, then tap Advertising

and switch on Limit Ad Tracking. Go back to Privacy and tap Location Services, then System Services, then switch off Location-Based Ads.

In Android, make sure you have the latest version of the Google Settings app installed (if you don't, install Google Play Services from [bit.ly/playservices373](http://bit.ly/playservices373)). Open the app, tap Ads and switch on 'Opt out of interest-based ads'. Open Chrome, tap 'Usage and crash reports' and choose 'Never send'.

## Stop PC programs spying on you

### Why am I opted in?

To help improve their software and services, some developers collect information about how you use their programs, by monitoring your activities and reporting back to base. This is particularly true of apps that are tied to the cloud, such as Microsoft Office 365 and Adobe Creative Cloud, and free web apps, such as Photoshop Express ([www.photoshop.com/tools](http://www.photoshop.com/tools)).

### How do I opt out?

The opt-out process varies from one application to another. For example, for Adobe products, head to the company's privacy page ([bit.ly/adobe373](http://bit.ly/adobe373)) and choose which data collection and marketing options you'd like to opt out of. Sign in with your Adobe account at [bit.ly/adobeapps373](http://bit.ly/adobeapps373) to disable info sharing. Office 365 users



should click File, then Options (in any Office app), then Trust Center followed by Trust Center Settings. Untick the box next to 'Send us information about your use and performance'.

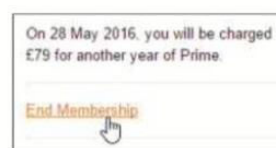
## Stop paying for things you didn't buy

### Why am I opted in?

From Amazon Prime to Google Music, a lot of free trials make you link a credit or debit card with your account before they let you access the free stuff on offer, but it's all too easy to forget to cancel once the free period is over. In most cases, you need to actively opt out before the trial ends. If you forget, you could end up paying a subscription for something you don't want.

### How do I opt out?

When you sign up for a free trial, you can cancel straightaway. Normally, the



provider won't stop access to the service until your free trial

ends, making this a sure-fire way to ensure you're not accidentally charged. Check wordings before you cancel, though. If the trial in question will end as soon as you cancel, and you'd still like to keep using it for the remainder of the trial, set yourself a reminder (on your phone's calendar, for example) on the day before the subscription is due to renew, so you don't forget to cancel it. ■

## OTHER THINGS YOU MIGHT WANT TO OPT OUT OF

If you're on the open electoral register, it could mean your details - name, address and so on - are available to anyone who wants that information. Luckily, you can opt out of the open register by contacting your local Electoral Registration Office - enter your postcode at [bit.ly/register373](http://bit.ly/register373) to find yours.

Got your own website or email address? WHOIS publishes the name and address details of anyone who registers a domain, potentially making private information about you available

publicly. Again, it's possible to opt out - see [bit.ly/whois373](http://bit.ly/whois373) for more.

Even your TV could be leaking information about you. Some Samsung Smart TVs, for example, have been found to display targeted advertising within apps. If you're seeing these and don't want to, one reported fix is to opt out of Yahoo Privacy Policy by going to the Menu on your Samsung TV, scrolling to Smart Hub, then Terms & Policy, then Yahoo Privacy Policy and ticking the box next to 'I disagree with the Yahoo Privacy Notice'.

