

How to improve the security and privacy of your iPhone: 5 steps

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Conner
Forrest



Image: James Martin/CNET

For most users, smartphones are a treasure trove of personal data and private information. With the concept of mobility expanding to include more forms of communication than ever before, these phones become a central point where many aspects of life converge.

As such, smartphones have also become a prime target for hackers and thieves. The hardware itself is valuable, sure, but the data within could give someone access to credit cards, bank accounts, and more.

SEE: [Apple iPhone 7: The smart person's guide](#)

The iPhone is known for its security, due to Apple's closed ecosystem and the [company's stance on encryption](#), but there are some additional steps you can take and settings you can change to further improve it. Here are five quick tips that will help you boost the security and privacy of your iPhone.

1. Enable 'Erase Data'

One way that an iPhone user can further limit an outsider's access to their personal data is to enable data wiping in the event of a passcode failure. If enabled, this feature will erase all the data on your iPhone after 10 failed attempts at guessing the passcode.

To turn it on, tap the Settings icon, and then tap the "Touch ID & Passcode" option. After being prompted to put in your current passcode, scroll to the bottom of the page. Then, simply tap the slider next to "Erase Data" to enable the feature.

Erase Data



Erase all data on this iPhone after 10 failed passcode attempts.

If you plan on using this feature, make sure your data is regularly backed up to your computer, or to your iCloud account. Also, make sure you don't forget your passcode!

2. Limit access on the lock screen

One of the more useful features of the iPhone is that it enables glanceable notifications and access on the phone's lock screen. However, this also creates privacy and security concerns, as thieves can access important information, including your Apple Wallet, and perform functions through Siri, without your password.

To limit what is available to view on the lock screen, follow the same steps to get to the Erase Data feature above. Tap the Settings icon, and then tap the "Touch ID & Passcode" option. After being prompted to put in your passcode, scroll to the bottom of the page. Under "Allow Access When Locked," you will see a list of features you can enable or disable. The features with the green sliders are enabled and viewable on the lock screen, so tap them to turn off their lock screen access.

ALLOW ACCESS WHEN LOCKED:

Today View



Notifications View



Siri



Reply with Message



Home Control



Wallet



3. Limit advertising

Much like other tech vendors, Apple uses your data to provide targeted ads. To disable this, start by tapping the Settings icon, and then tap "Privacy." Scroll to the bottom of this page, and tap on the "Advertising" option. Next, simply tap the "Limit Ad Tracking" slider to turn it on, and you're all set.

ALL ADVERTISERS

Limit Ad Tracking



[Reset Advertising Identifier...](#)

4. Turn off location tracking

One of the ways that mobile devices provide contextual information is by leveraging your location data. To limit or

disable location tracking on your iPhone, go into the Settings and tap on "Privacy." Toward the top of the screen, you'll see a "Location Services" options, which you should tap.

If you want to customize and limit which features and apps have access to your location, tap the "System Services" tab at the bottom of the page. If you pursue this option, disabling features such as "Share My Location" and "Frequent Locations" are good places to start. However, if you just want to disable Location Services as a whole, at the top of the Location Services page, simply tap the slider next to "Location Services" so that it isn't green. Keep in mind, though, this will limit the functionality of some apps and services.

System Services



- A purple location services icon will appear next to an item that has recently used your location.
- A gray location services icon will appear next to an item that has used your location within the last 24 hours.

5. Authenticate like a pro

Most iPhone users who have a passcode use a simple four- or six-digit code. But setting a longer and more complex passcode can improve your security. To do so, from Settings, tap "Touch ID & Passcode," and enter your current passcode. Tap the "Change Passcode" option and follow the prompt to enter your current passcode again. When you're given the option to input a new passcode, tap the "Passcode Options" link, and you can set a longer numerical or alphanumeric passcode there.

Passcode Options

1	2 ABC	3 DEF
4 GHI	5 JKL	6 MNO
7 PQRS	8 TUV	9 WXYZ
	0	

If you want to improve your authentication even further, consider [setting up two-factor authentication](#) as well.

Also see