

How to check Nearby Devices permissions on Android

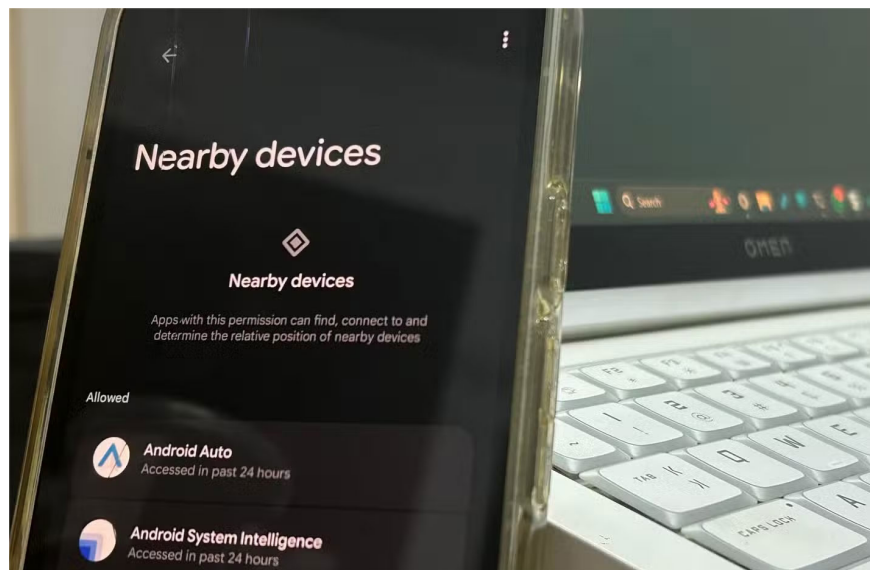
It's not that Android doesn't have privacy features; they're just buried deep in many menus.

Despite improvements over the years, Android still has some notable privacy issues. Apps can track your location, data, monitor your phone usage, and do more to build profiles as you explore Android, or the broader Google ecosystem .

There are privacy settings that help prevent big tech companies from tracking you, but finding some of them can feel like an archaeological dig. It's not that Android doesn't have privacy features; they're just buried deep in menus.

An important privacy setting you'll be hard-pressed to find

Android introduced the Nearby Devices permission in Android 12 as a privacy improvement. The idea is that instead of apps needing your full location permission just to connect to a Bluetooth device , they can use this more limited permission.



But even without location permissions, apps can still pinpoint your location by scanning for nearby Bluetooth devices. If you're sitting next to someone you've shared your location with Facebook, the app can pinpoint your location through Bluetooth scanning—even if you've never granted Facebook location permissions on your phone.

At first, this might not seem too alarming. After all, how accurate can a Bluetooth device's supposed location be, right? Except this data is combined with other data points like your connection to cell towers, Wi-Fi networks, distance to Bluetooth-enabled devices, etc. to create a very accurate estimate of your location. When combined with accelerometer and motion data from your phone, this estimate becomes frighteningly accurate.

Your phone will prompt you when apps ask for this permission, so unless you keep tapping "Yes" on every prompt that pops up, chances are not many apps will be able to do this. However, system apps on your phone use this permission by default.

These apps are often pre-installed and can be difficult to uninstall or disable. Depending on your version of Android, these features may include Android System Intelligence, Personal Data Intelligence, Android Auto, and Android Setup, among others.


How to check Nearby Devices permissions

Finding the Nearby Devices permission can be tricky unless you know where to look. If the Settings app on your phone has a search bar, we highly recommend using it. If not, follow these steps to find the Nearby Devices permission on Android 16 .


1. Go to your phone settings, scroll down and tap on **Security and privacy** .
2. Scroll down and tap **Privacy controls** in the **Privacy** section .
3. Click on **Permission manager** .
4. Tap **Nearby devices** from the list.
5. You'll be able to see which apps are allowed to access this feature. Tap an app to control permissions.


 Search settings


 **Battery**
71% - Until 9:15 pm


 **System**
Languages, gestures, time, backup

 **About phone**
Yadullah's Pixel 9a


 **Security and privacy**
App security, device lock, permissions


 **Location**
On / 27 apps have access to location

 **Passwords, passkeys and accounts**
Suggestions for sign-in and autofill

 **Digital Wellbeing and parental controls**
Screen time, app timers, bedtime schedules

 **Safety and emergency**
Emergency SOS, medical info, alerts

 **Accessibility**
Display, interaction, audio

 **Tips and support**
Help articles, phone and chat

← Security and privacy

Security



App security

Play Protect scanning is on



Device unlock

Screen lock, Fingerprint, Face, Watch, and Theft protection



Account security

Google Account is protected



Device finders

Find My Device



System and updates

Updates

Privacy

Privacy controls

Permissions, controls

Privacy dashboard

Show which apps recently used permissions

Private space

Keep private apps locked and hidden

Other settings

Advanced Protection

Protect your device and Google Account



Privacy controls

Security and privacy

Permission manager

Control app access to your data

Ads

Manage device data used to show you ads

Health Connect

Manage app access to health data

Data sharing updates for location

Review apps that changed the way that they may share your location data

Controls

Camera access

For apps and services



Microphone access

For apps and services. If this setting is off, microphone data may still be shared when you call an emergency number



Show clipboard access

Show a message when apps access text, images or other content that you've copied





Permission manager



Calendar
4 of 16 apps allowed



Call logs
8 of 14 apps allowed



Camera
16 of 77 apps allowed



Contacts
18 of 67 apps allowed



Health, fitness and wellness
0 of 4 apps allowed



Location
27 of 71 apps allowed



Microphone
15 of 71 apps allowed



Music and audio
6 of 21 apps allowed



Nearby devices
10 of 44 apps allowed



Notifications
69 of 116 apps allowed



Phone
22 of 53 apps allowed



Nearby devices



Nearby devices

Apps with this permission can find, connect to and determine the relative position of nearby devices

Allowed



Android Auto

Accessed in past 24 hours



Android System Intelligence

Accessed in past 24 hours



Find Hub



Google

Accessed in past 24 hours



Home



My Pixel

Accessed in past 24 hours



Phone

Accessed in past 24 hours



Settings

Accessed in past 24 hours

You'll see a few system apps here, and some of them actually need permissions. But there may also be other apps, like My Pixel if you're using a Google Pixel, and any other third-party apps you might have permissions for.

Remember that checking permissions on your Android phone isn't a one-time thing; it's an ongoing process. New system apps are often added via updates, and permissions can be reset in major Android upgrades. Manufacturers also often add their own privacy-invading system apps to Google's apps.

Your data belongs to you, not to sneaky apps you've accidentally given too many permissions to. Take a few minutes every now and then to dig through your privacy menus and disable permissions that are silently invading your privacy.

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