4.

REDUCE YOUR TRACES

The browser on your phone stores a lot of information about you – your location, what you search for, which websites you use – and may give that information away. You can regain some control of that info by making a few changes.

Phones, tablets and computers tend to come pre-installed with browsers that don't prioritise your privacy. Instead, you can download and use a browser that already keeps your web activity more private by default, shielding you from trackers.

And for some added privacy boosters, you can install extras known as "add-ons and extensions" (these are easy-to-install mini-programs for your browser that can make your online activity more private).

5.

UNTAG YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Have you contributed to your friends' data build-up by tagging them in photos and posts in the past?

Lighten their data load (and your conscience in the process) by untagging them in as many photos and posts as you can.

Pass it on! Encourage your friends, family and co-workers to join you in controlling fly-away data. If we all work together to control our data traces, we can better help each other detox.

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To block spying ads and invisible trackers, install uBlock Origin (for Chrome, Safari and Firefox) or Privacy Badger (for Chrome, Firefox and Opera).

To make sure your connections to websites are secure where possible, install HTTPS Everywhere: a browser extension that ensures that your communication with many major websites is encrypted and protected in transit. If you're a Safari user who'd like this feature, set your default search engine to a non-Google product like DuckDuckGo, which redirects you to encrypted connections automatically.

CONTROL YOUR SMARTPHONE DATA

to increase your online privacy

DATA DETOX KIT

If you think about what your data tells others about you, it may not seem like that big of a deal: who cares if you're a fan of country music, like to buy more shoes than you need or start planning your next vacation a year in advance?

The problem lies in what's happening with your data. Taken together over time, intimate digital patterns emerge: your habits, movements, relationships, preferences, beliefs and secrets are revealed to those who analyse and profit from them, like businesses and data brokers.

As you follow this Data Detox, you'll get a glimpse into how and why this is all happening and take practical steps to control your data traces across the internet.

Let's get started!

1.

CHANGE YOUR DEVICE NAME

At some point, you may have "named" your phone for Wi-Fi, Bluetooth or both – or maybe the name was automatically generated during setup. This means that "Alex Chung's Phone" is what's visible to the Wi-Fi network owner and, if your Bluetooth is turned on, to everyone in the area who has their Bluetooth on as well.

You wouldn't announce your name as you enter a café, restaurant or airport, so neither should your phone.

You can change the name of your phone to something less personally identifying, yet still uniquely you. Here's how:

DATA DETOX KIT

iPhone:
Change phone name:
Settings → General →
About → Change the name

Android:
Change Wi-Fi name:
Settings →
Wi-Fi → Menu →
Advanced / More features →
Wi-Fi Direct →
Rename Device
Change Bluetooth name:
Settings → Bluetooth →
Turn Bluetooth on
if it's off → Menu →
Rename Device →
Turn Bluetooth off
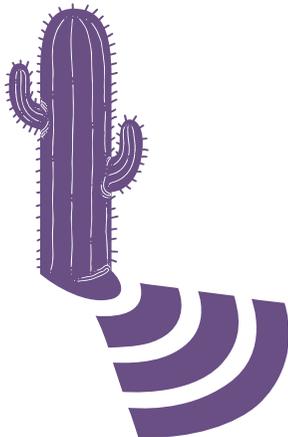
2.

CLEAR YOUR LOCATION FOOTPRINTS

While it may seem like your location data are just random bits of information, when they're seen all together, they could reveal important details about you and your habits, like where you live, where you work and where you like to hang out with your friends. That's what makes it highly sought-after by many companies and data brokers.

You can go through each app's permissions and turn off the location services. Look for the apps that don't actually need it for the service (does that game really need to know where you are?) and for the ones who you don't want to have it:

3.

TIDY UP YOUR APPS

Your social media apps, games and weather apps are interested in your data ... and they may be collecting quite a lot of it.

Getting rid of those random apps on your phone that you never use can be a powerful way to detox your digital self.

Plus, tidying up can also free up space on your phone, decrease data use and increase battery life.

Android:
Settings → Apps → Manage location access on a per-app basis

iPhone:
Settings → Privacy → Location services → Manage location access on a per-app basis

Android:
Settings → Apps → Select the app you want to uninstall → Uninstall

iPhone:
Press down on one app until they all start wiggling and small crosses appear in the top left corner of each app.

To delete an app, tap the small cross of that app.

To return to normal, press the home button.