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Ad Settings

Best practices for managing your ad settings and your ad experiences online.

1. How Do Online Ads Work?

Targeted ads use personal data and online behavior to aim relevant ads at certain demographic groups or at specific individuals. Targeted ads and the personalized ad experience are key parts of the internet. Ads are often how major tech sites make their money.

Online ads can track you and obtain information about you using the following methods:

- **Cookies** are bits of data stored in websites that contain information about your activity on a given site, including how long you were there, what you clicked on, how you scrolled, et cetera
- **URL Trackers** are bits of code at the end of a URL that track your behavior after you click a link

Other information includes:

- Search history
- Demographic information including location, age, marital status, et cetera
- Public posts and profiles

2. Activity: Where Do You Spend Your Time Online?

List which web browsers you use, both on your computer and on your phone:

List the social media sites and other sites (like Spotify, TikTok, etc) that you use regularly:

Consider what sorts of ads you tend to see on sites you visit and use. Are there any trends or things that stand out to you? Write your observations:

Now that you know a few ways that your activity can be tracked, how might the ads you are seeing reflect the nature of your activity online?

3. Best Practices for Managing Ad Settings

Use these suggestions to help you manage your online ad experiences. You can apply these best practices to the different sites you listed above.

- Delete and clear your cookies regularly
- Delete and clear your search history regularly

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- Use incognito mode or private browsing online
- Use a web browser dedicated to privacy, such as DuckDuckGo. Note that these are good to consider for phones especially
- Consider using a VPN
- Install an ad blocker for your web browser and/or your phone
- Use privacy settings on your various social media sites and online accounts to better understand what advertisers see about you and better manage your privacy settings. Be informed about what options are available to you.

Here are some places you can go to check your ad settings for popular sites. This list isn't exhaustive, though, so be sure to check your account settings for sites or devices you use that are not on this list!

Google Ad Settings

https://adssettings.google.com

Microsoft Ad Settings

https://account.microsoft.com/privacy/ad-settings

Facebook Ad Settings

https://www.facebook.com/ads/settings

Instagram Ads Help Center

https://help.instagram.com/1415228085373580

Tiktok Help Center

https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/personalized-ads-and-data/personalization-and-data