

Surveillance & AI

5 things you can do TODAY to reduce how much you're being watched

AI Savvy Seniors

Future Tech Series

June 2026

You don't have to accept being watched. Each action below takes under 5 minutes and has an immediate effect.

1 Turn off ad tracking on your phone

Your phone shares a unique ID with every app you use, allowing advertisers to follow you across apps and websites. Turning this off stops that tracking cold — your apps still work exactly the same.

Do this now: iPhone: Settings → Privacy & Security → Tracking → turn off "Allow Apps to Request to Track".

Android: Settings → Privacy → Ads → "Delete advertising ID".

2 Mute your smart speaker when not using it

Alexa, Google Home, and Siri are always listening for a wake word — and studies confirm they sometimes activate by accident. Every device has a physical mute button that cuts the microphone at the hardware level.

Do this now: Find the mute button on your device (usually on top or the side). Press it. A red ring or indicator light means it's truly off. Press again to re-enable when you want to use it.

3 Check which apps can see your location

Dozens of apps on your phone track your location in the background — including apps you'd never expect, like games or shopping apps. This lets them build a detailed picture of your daily movements.

Do this now: iPhone: Settings → Privacy & Security → Location Services. Android: Settings → Location → App permissions. Change any non-essential app from "Always" to "Never" or "While Using."

4 Switch to a privacy-focused browser

Google Chrome tracks your browsing and links it to your Google account to build an advertising profile. Two free alternatives block trackers automatically with no setup required.

Do this now: Download DuckDuckGo (duckduckgo.com) or Brave (brave.com) — both are free. Use either one for sensitive searches like health topics, finances, or anything personal.

5 Cover your camera and review mic permissions

A small piece of electrical tape or a \$3 webcam cover is the simplest surveillance defense there is. Then check which apps have permission to use your phone's camera and microphone.

Do this now: Cover your laptop camera now. Then: iPhone/Android: Settings → Privacy → Camera (and Microphone). Revoke access for any app that has no obvious reason to see or hear you.

Remember:

Surveillance thrives on default settings. These five steps put you back in control of what you share and with whom — without giving anything up.