

Is your TV watching everything you do?

BY KOMANDO STAFF, KOMANDO.COM, DECEMBER 5, 2020

Smart TVs are big money savers compared to other tech on the market. Not only do they tend to be cheaper than traditional TVs, but they also include built-in apps that can save you from having to buy streaming devices like a Roku or Fire TV Stick.

But as with any smart technology, there's a price to be paid for the convenience. In return for an always-connected experience, smart TVs collect data on users — a lot of it

You won't believe how your smart TV is not just gobbling up your viewing data. In some cases, it's also gathering information about your home. In this guide, we'll walk you through how to opt-out of this data collection so you can get back to binging your favorite shows in peace.

Turn off your smart TV's tracking features

Can you minimize your smart TV's snooping activities? Yes. Our advice: Turn off its tracking features — especially Automatic Content Recognition.

What is ACR, and how do you turn it off? It's a visual recognition feature that can identify every ad, TV show or movie you're playing on your TV. This includes streaming boxes, cable/over-the-air TV and even DVD and Blu-Ray disk players. This data is collected and can be used for marketing and targeted advertising purposes. If this all sounds too creepy to you, there are thankfully ways to turn it off. The exact methods will depend on your TV's brand.

Vizio

If you own a Vizio smart TV you can turn off your set's ACR features. Here's how:

On older Vizio TV sets that use Vizio Internet Apps (VIA), go to the TV's **System**, and then: **Reset & Admin > Smart Interactivity > Off**.

On Vizio smart TVs that use the newer SmartCast system, go to **System > Reset & Admin > Viewing Data > toggle it to Off**.

Samsung

Some Samsung smart TVs include voice control. If you're concerned about your privacy, you can turn off voice control, ACR and ad tracking completely.

On newer Samsung sets, go to **Settings > Support > scroll down to Terms & Policies**. Here you can turn off **Viewing Information Services** (Samsung's ACR technology), **Internet-based Advertising** (for personalized ad tracking) and **Voice Recognition Services**.

On older Samsung smart TVs, go to the TV's **Smart Hub** menu **> Settings > Support > look for Terms & Policy > then disable SyncPlus and Marketing**. You can disable **Voice Recognition Services** in this section, too.

Keep in mind that turning off your Samsung TV's Voice Recognition Services will disable its voice commands.

LG

LG's ACR technology is baked into its newer WebOS-powered smart TVs, known as **LivePlus**. To turn this off, go to **Settings > All Settings > scroll down to General > scroll down to a setting called LivePlus > toggle it to Off**.

To limit other forms of data collection on your LG smart TV, go back to **Settings > All Settings > scroll down to General > About This TV > User Agreements > toggle Personalized Advertising to Off**.

Amazon Fire TV

Amazon's Fire TV platform is baked into some smart TVs. Although Amazon said that it does not use ACR to identify content on Fire TV Edition TVs, it can still collect data about the over-the-air channels you watch and the streaming apps you use.

To turn this off, go to your TV's **Settings > Preferences > then scroll to the "Right to Privacy Settings."** Turn off the setting labeled **"Collect App and Over-the-Air Usage Data."** You can also turn off **Interest-based ads** in this section.

Roku TV

On Roku-powered smart TVs, you can turn off ACR by going to **Settings** > scroll down and select **Privacy > Smart TV Experience**.

Next, uncheck **“Use Information for TV Inputs”** to disable ACR. Although this will stop your Roku TV from identifying your content on the pixel level, Roku can still collect data about the Roku TV streaming channels you’ve installed and use.

To prevent personalized ads on your Roku profile, go to **Settings > Privacy > Advertising**, then check **“Limit ad tracking.”** **Note:** This setting is also available on Roku streaming gadgets.

Samba TV

Another way advertisers track you is through a service called Samba TV.

How widespread is Samba TV? According to the “New York Times,” the company has struck deals with about a dozen popular TV makers to have its software placed on several models.

Brands with Samba TV include **Sony, Sharp, TCL, Element, Sanyo, Toshiba, Westinghouse, Seiki** and **Philips**.

Samba TV describes itself as “a cutting-edge technology layer on your TV that understands what your TV is playing, regardless of the source.” It also “communicates with your devices, enabling personalized recommendations and unique second-screen experiences for compatible TVs and apps.”

But wait, there’s more! Samba TV’s system can also reach out to other devices in your home connected to the same network as the TV. This means that aside from the ability to recognize and track content regardless of source, Samba TV can also create a “device map” of your home.

Samba TV itself doesn’t sell its tracking data directly. Instead, advertisers and marketing firms pay them to send targeted ads to other connected gadgets in a home.

For example, they can direct ads and recommendations to your smartphone after a client’s TV commercial plays.

Advertisers can also add Samba TV tags to their websites to let them know how many people visit after watching one of their ads.

Did you opt-in to Samba TV?

Have you opted into Samba TV’s service without even realizing it?

See, when a Samba TV-enabled device is set up for the first time, consumers are encouraged to opt-in to the service and agree to its terms of service and privacy policy.

The opt-in sounds enticing enough – “Interact with your favorite shows. Get recommendations based on the content you love. Connect your devices for exclusive content and special offers,” it states.

The problem? The nitty-gritty details of its terms of service are only available online via browser or if you click through to another screen on your TV.

Although these documents do disclose their tracking practices, they are also long and difficult to understand. The company’s [terms of service](#) exceed 6,500 words, and the [privacy policy](#) is over 4,000 words! (Who actually reads these cryptic terms of service anyway?)

It’s no wonder that more than 90% of people choose to opt-in not realizing the amount of information they’re giving up to the company.

How to opt-out of Samba TV

If you’re totally creeped out by Samba TV’s data collection and you do want to opt-out, here’s how.

Smart TVs

According to Samba TV’s website, you can opt-out of its smart TV services anytime by finding the option in a TV’s “Settings” page or within the “Interactive TV Service” user interface.

If applicable, another way to limit spying is by enabling “Limit Ad Tracking” from the “Privacy” menu within the “Interactive TV Settings” on your smart TV.

Samba TV wrote that its advertising platform would opt your Samba TV ad ID out of targeted advertising based on content viewing if you do this. You can also opt out of Samba TV web and app-based interest advertising with these steps:

Web browsers

You can opt out of having Samba use your web browsing information for interest-based advertisements by visiting the Network Advertising Initiative's (NAI) [opt-out page](#) or accessing the "Opt out of Samba TV Ads" option within the company's [privacy policy page](#).

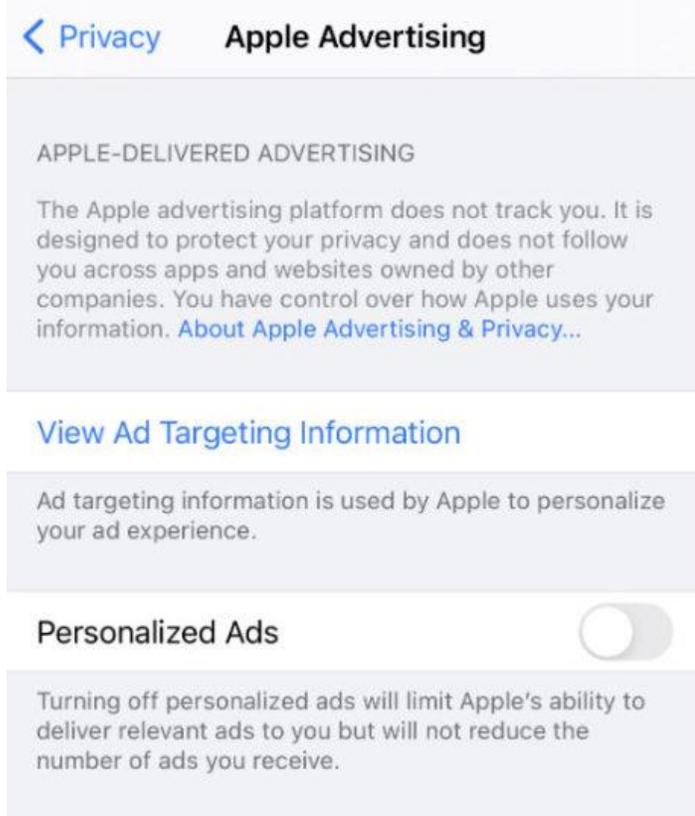
Mobile devices

According to Samba TV, the most effective and up-to-date method is to limit ad tracking on your mobile device.

Here's how you do this:

For Apple:

iPhone, iPad, or iPod Touch – Go to **Settings > Privacy > Apple Advertising > Toggle "Personalized Ads" to Off.**



For Android:

(**Note:** Instructions may vary depending on your manufacturer and model.)

Android phones – Generally, on an Android gadget, you can go to **Settings > Google > Ads > toggle "Opt out of Ads Personalization" to On.** You can also reset your gadget's advertising ID on this page.

Your other options

A few other options are simple but may be impractical, such as disconnecting your smart appliances from the internet. This, of course, renders gadgets that rely on an internet connection, like smart speakers or the web features of smart TVs, totally useless and may not be a viable option for most people.

If you think the convenience of having these smart gadgets is not worth the privacy implications, then it's your choice to keep them out of your home.