

 **Fuck Google**



Some tips for the casual de-Gogler

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## De-Googling in Several Not Particularly Simple Steps

Okay, so let's say you've been hearing some talk for a while and you have decided that the exhausted naysayers of the internet are correct: Google is a giant monopolistic nightmare that sucks and is ruining the internet.

The natural response to this epiphany is to make an effort to kick Google to the curb. But then you start looking at what that actually means. You've used Google for years. Google is your:

- Web Browser
- Email Provider
- Cloud Storage Host
- Office Productivity Suite
- They make the OS for your cellphone
- They make the OS for your \*computer\*
- They make the video chat that you use
- They provide the maps that you use
- They make your cellphone
- They make your doorbell
- They own the company that makes your heart rate monitor
- They own the company that is your primary source of video entertainment
- And, finally, they're your primary search engine.

How did this happen? How did Google take over so much of your life when you weren't looking? And to be fair, most people weren't looking - you shouldn't have to look for a company that tracks your menstrual cycle, which entrances to your home you use the most, what your favorite entertainment is, and where you are at this second.

Enough is enough. This is bullshit. You've got to get out.

But. Like. How?

They're everywhere. Google is *everywhere*. And you've used Gmail for ten years, it's where you've got all your contacts stored. Google photos has all the photos from your vacations and birthday parties. You've posted homework and slideshows and silly videos of you dancing with your friends on YouTube, and your favorite creators don't actually post anywhere else.

Google is everywhere. Is it even possible to get away?

Well, let's unpack that.

First of all, yadda yadda yadda no ethical consumption under capitalism, blah blah blah consumers subject to a monopoly, you get the deal. It is difficult and arduous to get away from Google because Google has designed their presence in the world to be difficult to avoid. There are large parts of the internet that are walled off to people who don't use Google products. There are no apps that compete with Docs in terms of collaborative creation on your phone. If you are a person without a lot of money who needs a computer, there's a very good chance that most of the computers in your price range run a Google operating system that will force you to use a Google browser.

Trying to completely cut all of that out of your life is exhausting - and besides it's kind of impossible. You're interacting with Google products that you don't even know about all the time because Google servers are serving up the sites you visit even if you searched for them in a different browser and you used a different search engine. And you can't keep up with what Google buys and owns and cancels and sells from day to day. When you started your YouTube account or bought your Nest smart-home appliances maybe Google didn't own those companies. Do you know who owns the company that makes your fitness tracker? Sure it says "FitBit" on the band but who owns FitBit?

So it's impossible to get away from Google. Google is everywhere. Besides, you're sure that you're just a random internet user. Google doesn't care about your data, right? It doesn't really matter if they have your info, because they're never going to look at your specific info over another user's info, right? This is fine. This has to be fine, because there are no other options, right?

Wrong!

Even the smallest thing that you can take away from Google is worth it. Fuck Google. They want to own the world and they don't get to, we're taking away what we can, even if it's only scraps. They may be scraps, but they are *my* scraps, not Google's scraps. And eventually, if all of us collect enough scraps, we can sew together one big "Fuck Google" quilt. Or something. This metaphor got away from me.

But all of that is to say that it is absolutely worth it to step away from Google in every area that it is possible to do so, and that you do not have to feel guilty for using Google in the places that it is necessary for you.

So what's necessary?

This is where a lot of people get stuck in the de-Googling process. They go "well what do I do about Android? Are my choices to buy an iPhone (which has its own constellation of issues and is also fuck-off expensive) or do some weird leet hacker shit and install a Linux OS on my Samsung? That's terrible! I can't do either of those things! Fuck it, I guess I'll just keep going as I was."

And in that case, Android is necessary for you, which means that keeping a Gmail account is necessary for you, so don't sweat keeping those things. Having a Gmail account is not an evil in and of itself, and using it in the situations where a Gmail account is required isn't your fault and doesn't make you a bad or ideologically impure person or something, it's just a frustrating hassle in the world that Google has bought. Deal with it when you have to, and de-Google the things that are easy. So let's start there.

## **The Relatively Easy Steps of Kicking Google to the Curb**

### **1. Change your Browser to Firefox**

One of the easiest things that you can do to de-Google is also one of the most effective things you can do to work toward a world where Google doesn't have a monopoly on our lives, and that is to install Firefox on your computer. This is, unfortunately, not an option for most people using Chromebooks. If you're using a Chromebook and installing Firefox is not an option, don't worry, there are still things that you can do but we'll get to them later.

So, first things first, install Firefox. WHILE YOU ARE AT IT, install Firefox on your phone (it is available for both Android and iOS, though iOS doesn't allow you to add extensions so install Firefox Focus if you're an iOS user) and set it as your default browser for your phone. One of the huge ways that Google keeps poking its head into everybody's business is that people just go with the default option for things like email accounts and web browsers, and these days a lot of those defaults are Google-owned. So take the time to select something *other* than the default. Hide the Google search bar on your phone. Delete the Chrome shortcut on your desktop. Use Firefox.

And, yes, it should be Firefox that you use and install. Nearly every other browser is a Chromium browser, which means that even if you aren't directly feeding data to Google, your browser is being developed and built in a way that will eventually benefit Google.

Just using Firefox is the single biggest step you can take to say 'fuck you' to Google and deny them information about you.

And Firefox has made it very easy to move over! Once you've installed Firefox, go to the settings menu in the upper right corner, select "Bookmarks," select "Manage Bookmarks," select "Import and Backup," select "Import Data from Another Browser," select your previous browser, and follow the steps of the import wizard and hey presto, all your shit is now moved over from Chrome to Firefox and you can uninstall Chrome if you want to.

Okay, next step: now that you've installed Firefox, add the uBlock Origin extension to the browser. You can also add uBlock Origin to Firefox in Chrome. (Upper left hand corner menu, select "Add-ons and Themes," search "uBlock Origin" in the search bar at the top, select uBlock Origin, select "Add to Firefox" and grant permissions to enable the extension.)

An important side note: as of this writing (October 2022) you can still install uBlock Origin on Chrome, but Google is taking that option away in 2023. Now is the perfect time to move everything over and get used to using Firefox.

Firefox blocks a lot of data tracking and user analysis tools by default, but uBlock should ensure that you aren't being targeted by Google AdWords or AdSense because you aren't getting any fucking ads. Google gets no data from you! You are a frustratingly blank slate to them because uBlock prevents your computer from interacting with ad delivery networks. Fuck Google. They get nothing.

Next, install the PrivacyBadger and Decentraleyeyes extensions. PrivacyBadger does more comprehensive tracker blocking than Firefox has enabled by default and Decentraleyeyes prevents Content Delivery Networks (aka Google and others) from serving up the content you see on the web. Once more: fuck Google. They get nothing.

Other Firefox extensions I recommend are multi-account containers, Auto Tab Discard, Facebook Container, Wayback Machine, and Bitwarden but this is not a "why Firefox is awesome" writeup (Firefox is awesome for MANY reasons) so I'm not going to elaborate on those here. I'm just giving you the names of the extensions I find helpful because new Firefox users often don't know how to find the cool extensions and those are some cool extensions.

This is often where people ask "what do I do about sites that only work on Chrome?" and my answer to that is to install a non-Chrome Chromium browser. Opera, Microsoft Edge, and Brave are all well-

established, well-supported Chromium browsers that should be able to use the same extensions that Chrome does and work on the same websites that Chrome does. Use the Chromium browser when necessary (many students have to use chromium browsers to access school programs, for instance) but limit your use of the Chromium browser and spend most of your online time in Firefox.

That's your browser sorted. Next step: Email!

## **2. Create a non-Gmail email address to use as your primary email**

You are likely going to need a Gmail account for one reason or another. Don't beat yourself up about it. But you do not need to have your Gmail account as your primary personal email account. What you should do is go to Proton.Me and sign up for a free ProtonMail account. Your goal is to transition over to using ProtonMail as your primary email over time and to reserve your Gmail account only for the things it's necessary for (your Android phone, for instance, will require a Gmail account. Your employer may require you to use Google Authenticator for Multifactor Authentication, which will require a Gmail account).

You don't even have to move all your email or contacts over right away, just create the ProtonMail account and as you find it necessary to use email addresses for websites or to reach out to people, start using your ProtonMail account for that. Hell, it can even be useful to keep the Gmail account as the place where you sign up for throwaway sites that you won't use often. Eventually, you want your ProtonMail account to be the one that you use personally and professionally.

In order to do this, make sure to install the ProtonMail app on any devices you use so that your email is easily available and at you fingertips, and in the meantime hide the Gmail app on your devices. It often can't be uninstalled, but you can bury the icon among your less-used apps.

## **3. Set a different default search engine**

Google has paid to be the default search engine in a lot of browsers. Google is the default search engine in Firefox. Google is pretty much everyone's default search engine. There is a Google Search bar in the menu of most Android phones, and search bars around the web are powered by Google Search.

Google Search is still one of the better search engines that exist, and it is often frustrating to use other search engines because they return suboptimal results. But, quick question: how frequently do you actually use your search engine for something that needs an a real answer?

Most people use search engines as dictionaries or a quick way to get to Wikipedia. Some people use search engines as a business directory and an easy way to look up phone numbers. The vast majority of searches are searches for information that is extremely easy to find and uniform across search engines.

For my search engine, I have set DuckDuckGo as my default with Google as a backup. Firefox makes this very easy (top right menu, select "Settings," select "Search," go to the "Default Search Engine" and select your preferred search engine then scroll down to "Search Shortcuts" and select the search engines you want in the search engine dropdown menu, once you have added these options your search bar in your browser will show other search options aside from your default when you click in the search bar). I've got several other backups as well, including Wikipedia (so now if I want to search Wikipedia I can do it directly from my search bar), eBay, Bing, and the RECAP Archive.

The truth is that other search engines will return bad results sometimes. Sometimes you will be looking for something complicated that has a specific answer and DuckDuckGo isn't going to figure out what you want from the search terms you feed it. But the point is once again to simply do anything other than accept Google as the default. Google doesn't need to know that you search the spelling of "necessary" five times a day. Google doesn't need to know that you searched for "Cutting Board Bacterial Growth Study" during an internet argument. Google doesn't need to know that you searched "protonmail" because you forgot the URL and wanted to make sure you got it right before you shared it.

And I would like to make a point about Google Search: it also sucks. Google Search is so aggressively tailored to specific user profiles and to delivering specific types of content that it is basically useless to look for anything from a specific year, or while excluding specific websites, or while looking for a specific author. Google wants to give you everything, but mostly they want to give you pages that are optimized for Google, so it doesn't matter that you are looking at a paper on hippos and otters published in 2010, it is going to serve you results from a paper about otters that got a lot of twitter engagement in 2022 and you are going to have a hell of a time excluding that paper from the results.

The truth is that searching was great for a while, and now it kind of isn't, and to find what you want you are going to have to use a hodgepodge of techniques, but in the meantime you can at least deny Google the types of little daily searches that any search engine can handle. Fuck Google. They get nothing.

### **The Somewhat more Complicated Steps of Kicking Google to the Curb**

Using a different browser, blocking ads, creating another email address, and setting a different default search engine are pretty low-stress ways to ease some of the hold that Google has on your life. If you're looking to get a little further away from Google, it takes a little more effort.

#### **1. Live in Your Browser**

One thing that can help is to use a browser instead of apps on your phone, or to use alternative apps. Don't use the YouTube app on your phone, open YouTube in Firefox on your phone. Don't use Google Maps, download Osmand or some other non-Google mapping software.

This is going to suck in some ways and be awesome in other ways. Let's take the youtube-in-the-browser example: YouTube in Firefox Mobile kind of sucks. It can be difficult to get playlists to play in the order you want, it can be difficult to search, the autoplay makes terrible decisions, fullscreen viewing is janky. The list goes on.

You know what's great though? Blocking YouTube ads, an option that is not available in the app. And you know what, I hate YouTube ads much more than I hate navigating a fiddly interface in my mobile browser.

This is the kind of tradeoff that you will see all over the place when you stop using Google as default. Yeah, Osmand's search function kind of sucks, but you can use it offline - something not possible with Google Maps. Yeah, Duck Duck Go doesn't return results perfectly tailored to you, but it also isn't trying to serve up answers based on your online purchase history.

I am probably going to sound like a crusty old curmudgeon here, but I think we've gotten too used to seeing the internet as a series of apps and platforms. I think that we've gotten too used to taking what is

handed to us instead of searching for something better. Your primary interface with the internet shouldn't be Facebook, you shouldn't shop on Amazon and Walmart because their apps came preinstalled on your phone. Be intentional about this shit. Use your browser and choose where you're going to go.

Go to actual websites! Don't rely on apps and platforms! Good Luck!

## **2. Use Libre Office instead of GSuite or Microsoft Office**

Okay look I know I'm a grind about this but Libre Office is a gift to the world and more people should be using it.

Not only is it open source, not only is it free, it is also very, very good. Libre Office does a LOT, and while it may not look as sleek or modern as GSuite or Microsoft Office it is a hell of a lot more functional in a lot of directions.

Did you know that full use of Microsoft Office requires an internet connection these days? It doesn't store its dictionary or thesaurus or help information locally, it's all online. GSuite also requires an internet connection (as well as a Google ID).

You know what doesn't? Beautiful, beloved Libre Office. Precious cinnamon roll, too good for this world, too pure.

In case you hadn't guessed, this document is being written in Libre Office Writer. The font is called Liberation Serif, because that's freedom, baby. This program will never snitch on me to its manufacturer, it knows all the words I need it to even if the internet goes down and never comes back, and it cost me zero dollars and asked me for zero information.

I love you, Libre Office.

### **Pain-in-the-ass Steps of Kicking Google to the Curb**

#### **1. Suck it up and change storage providers and/or just straight-up stop using cloud storage**

Look, we all knew it was coming. How do you get your shit off of Google Cloud? Sure, there are other storage providers out there, but they're more expensive and you'd have to move all your stuff over and that's a nightmare, right?

Well. Actually. Yeah. That's correct. Migrating cloud providers can be a big pain in the ass and Google storage is cheap.

However Google will hand over any information subpoenaed by the cops without blinking an eye and also fuck them, Google gets nothing.

In other rants I have talked about over-reliance on cloud storage. I kind of think that cloud storage is a bad idea. I kind of think that you don't own anything that you don't have physical possession of.

[There was a story recently about a man who texted a photo of his child to his wife](#) so that she could show the image to a pediatrician. The photo was misidentified as CSEM and the man was locked out of

his Google account for violating their ToS. Even after he was investigated by police and cleared of all wrongdoing, the man is not able to access his Google account, which means that he can't get pictures stored in the Google Cloud or get his contacts from Gmail; anything that he was working on in Docs is lost. He lost his Google Fi account and that meant he had to get a new phone with a new number. Since neither his primary email account nor his old phone number were accessible, he wasn't able to log into a wide variety of services because he couldn't verify the legitimacy of his access. Anything that was stored on non-Google accounts but required access to his Gmail or his phone number to sign in was also lost.

One thought experiment I like to consider every once in a while is to ask myself what I would lose if the internet went down tomorrow and never came back. Social media sites are an obvious answer, and much of my blog would be gone forever. But I wouldn't lose most of my writing, because most of my writing exists in documents like this, which live on my computer and don't require an internet connection to access. All of my music and all of my photos are also on my computer, except for stuff that I don't use all that much, which is on a backup drive. Duplicates of the important stuff are burned to DVDs, and let me tell you, the "important stuff" for me doesn't take up a whole DVD.

In most computers these days, the storage drives are smaller than they should be because of the assumption that people will put most of their information on cloud storage. Storage has been getting cheaper and better for a long time. Five years ago I thought that 2TB SSDs would be the standard in desktops in 2022; I didn't anticipate that we'd get to a place where 256GB is one of the more generous baseline options.

I think it is important to rethink our entire approach to storage, and I think that's yet another part of our digital lives that would be better if we moved backward instead of forward.

So if you really want to know my opinion about how to replace Google Drive or Google Cloud, my answer is to use backup drives and get used to a more inconvenient world. Just as I think you shouldn't be expected to respond to an email at all hours of the day, I also think that you shouldn't have to have constant access to all of your data. If someone needs a file they can wait until you get back to your computer for you to send it to them.

But if you want a more moderate approach: Proton offers ProtonDrive free with 1GB of encrypted storage which, if I'm being honest, I think is more than enough for personal, vital, accessible-anywhere storage. If 1GB of cloud storage isn't enough for you, the first paid level of ProtonDrive is \$3.99 a month for 200GB. This is twelve dollars a year more than Google, and seems like a bargain to me because you get the added benefit of encryption for all your stored information. Their individual plans max out at 500GB but if you have more than 500GB of data that you think needs to be available in the cloud and couldn't stand to have it on a backup drive, I think that it's probably time to reassess your data storage philosophy.

So! ProtonDrive, physical storage media, and not having constant global internet access to every bit of digital data you've ever owned. That's the pain-in-the-ass recommendation I've got for you. "You don't actually need all that storage and you shouldn't want it" probably isn't the answer you're looking for, but it's what I've got for you. Convenience is killing the world. Say goodbye to Google Cloud and next-day shipping and look forward to a better tomorrow.

**2. Say goodbye to Google docs and ultra-convenient, free online collaboration while you're at it.**



Much like Libre Office, a part of the better tomorrow is already here and it is called Cryptpad.

Why do people use Google Docs? Because it's handy software that is available everywhere and across multiple platforms. What does Google Docs do that most other software doesn't? It allows multiple people to work on a document together.

Cryptpad does that last thing beautifully. Need to create a group PowerPoint for a class project? Don't share the email address you made up when you were twelve with five people you're going to spend the next ten years avoiding; set up a slideshow in Cryptdrive and none of you even need to log in to work on it. You don't even need to have an email address to work on it.

Now, admittedly, this is a feature that is perhaps more attractive to people who are doing stuff that's a little more intensive than a lower-division Anthropology presentation, but it is an extremely useful tool nonetheless.

Cryptpad is good as hell, it is free, and it is private. It is an encrypted, zero-knowledge, online collaborative office suite.

It, unfortunately, does not have apps for its amazing software. It is browser-only and can be difficult to use on mobile devices.

I said that it was going to be a pain in the ass. I wasn't kidding. Cryptpad fucking rules, but trying to convince normies to use it makes you sound like you're paranoid and possibly dangerous. Good luck getting classmates and coworkers to try it. Good luck getting your grandma to try it.

### **What about YouTube?**

There's no getting around the fact that there isn't a good YouTube alternative; most other options either have limited storage or have a fairly significant cost (for a video hosting app) and none of the alternative video platforms have anywhere near the amount of content that YouTube does. If you need to know how to fix an oven or how to replace your U-joints you're not going to find instructional videos on Vimeo.

This is the place where you accept what you can't change and change what you can. Use YouTube logged out. Use YouTube in a private browser window. Use YouTube in a container you create just for YouTube so that the only information it gets your history on YouTube.

Again. Yadda, yadda, yadda, there is no ethical consumption under capitalism etc., etc. Your choice to host a video on YouTube because you don't have anywhere else to put it that will allow it to be seen doesn't mean you're a bad person or you're betraying ? the de-google movment? anti-capitalism? Whatever. You're not betraying anything and you're not letting anyone down. Sometimes you've got to use a Google product, and sometimes there are no good alternatives. Don't beat yourself up about it, just try to reduce your interaction with Google to a minimum and try to reduce the amount of information you share with Google as much as possible.

## The Huge pain-in-the-ass step to de-Google

I am not a person who knows or understands telephones. I hate phones and I use my cellphone for looking at the internet, listening to podcasts on an open-source app, and ignoring text messages. I am not really a person who can give you advice about phones.

However if you're really serious about getting as much Google out of your life as possible, you are probably going to be interested in de-Googleing your smartphone.

One way to do this is to get an iPhone. I will not be doing that for at least eight hundred reasons at MSRP, but also because my "Fuck Apple" attitude is nearly as strong as my "Fuck Google" attitude.

That being said, iPhones are very secure and Apple is very privacy-focused; if you care about privacy but are uninterested in learning how to use a weirdo operating system and you have the money, Apple phones are a good option.

If you are interested in learning a weirdo operating system I've got good news for you: they exist and people are working on them all the time and they are out there in the world for you to try. Unfortunately a [link to It'S FOSS](#) is the most I can help you in that direction because I am, again, not really a phone person.

However I do at the very least recommend uninstalling every Google app that your phone will let you uninstall and seeking out some alternative. If you're not ready to install a new OS you can at least be ready to uninstall YouTube, Search, and Maps.

Because fuck Google. They get nothing.

This guide is a ms-demeanor.tumblr.com production.  
Free for use anywhere, it's your problem now, bud.

You can do anything you'd like with this guide, including give it to students, give it to friends, print out a copy and set it on fire, you just can't sell it. No credit needed but if you want to credit me ms-demeanor.tumblr.com is fine. Created in Libre Office Writer, because open source software rules and you should use it.