



SURVIVOR'S GUIDE TO LOCATION TRACKING

#KNOWTECHABUSE

Location privacy is critical to safety. Phones and apps can share location with other people, sometimes without our knowledge. In addition, location tracking devices and built-in GPS in cars can all be misused to monitor location. Location tools can also be used to increase safety (to know where your children or pets are), for convenience (to find lost phones or keys), or to know if an abusive person is nearby.

There are times when you may want more location privacy, particularly if you're worried that someone is tracking you. This guide offers information and strategies to help you figure out if you're being tracked, and to decide what to do.

Step 1: Prioritise Your Safety

Get more information. Navigating violence, abuse, and stalking can be difficult and dangerous. Advocates can help you figure out options and local resources and help you create a plan for your safety. You can contact [1800 RESPECT \(1800 737 732\)](tel:1800737732) to be connected with local support services.

Trust your instincts. Abusers, stalkers, and perpetrators are often very determined to maintain control over their victims, and technology is one of many tools they use to do this. If it seems like the person knows too much about you, they might be monitoring your devices, accessing your online accounts, tracking your location, or gathering information about you online.

Step 2: Narrow Down How Your Location is Being Tracked

- Is there a pattern to what the other person knows? Do they know where you are in real-time, or do they only know where you've been?
- Do you share your phone account with others? Does anyone else have access to your phone or know how to log on to your account?
- Are you using apps that share your location? If so, who can see that information?
- Could your friends or family be sharing your location, for example through social media?

Step 3: Learn More About How that Technology Works

Phones & Mobile Devices

- Phones track your location through GPS, Bluetooth and ultra-wide broadband (UWB) built into your phone, Wi-Fi connections that may reveal location, and cellular towers that connect your phone to the network. You can turn off

some location sharing, but emergency services and phone companies will be able to access your location whenever the phone is on.

- Phones connected to your Apple or Google account have features designed to help find lost phones. Anyone who has access to your account can see the location of your phone.
- Your phone, tablet, or laptop will also make a record of all the Wi-Fi networks you've connected to. You may be able to delete all or part of that history.

Apps & Social Media

- You might be sharing your location through social media and other apps. Check the location and privacy settings in each app.
- Camera and photo apps often store the location where a photo was taken and include that information when you share a photo. You can usually turn off location in the settings of the camera and photo apps. Remember that location could also be revealed by what's in the photos, such as landmarks.
- Friends might share your location through social media by checking you into a certain location or mentioning you by name in a post that includes a specific location. If you use that app, you may be able to set up notifications so that you know if others share your location, or you might be able to change your privacy settings to not allow others to share your location.
- Some apps request your location. Examples include shopping apps, ride-share services, or food delivery services. Someone with access to those accounts could see your location.
- Spyware (also called Stalkerware) installed on your phone, tablet, or laptop can track your location. This type of app could be installed without your knowledge and may not be visible on the device. Read more about [Spyware](#).

Global Positioning System (GPS) Devices

- Many cars have built-in navigational systems that could reveal a history of where you've been to anyone with access to the system.
- GPS devices can also be placed in a vehicle or personal belongings to track someone. These devices can be inexpensive, small, and easily hidden. GPS devices usually need to be connected to a power source.
- GPS tracking information can be real-time, sharing the data directly to the person who installed the GPS via a website or their phone, or it can record location history to be reviewed later.

Location Trackers

- Newer location tracking devices are small and can be hidden in a bag or backpack, or in gifts.
- Unlike GPS devices, these location trackers don't have to be connected to a power source and can last for months without being recharged.
- These location devices are connected to an app or online account.

- Location trackers use some combination of GPS, active RFID (Radio Frequency Identification), Bluetooth LE (low energy), UWB and Wi-Fi networks.

Step 4: Safety & Privacy Strategies

There are steps you can take to secure your location. There isn't one "right" way to respond. What works for some may not work or be safe for you.

CAUTION: Making changes will often alert the other person, and they might become more abusive. They might try to track you another way or force you to share your location again. It might also erase evidence.

Documenting What's Happening

You can document what is happening if it feels safe before you make any changes. You have the option to share this with the police, a legal representative or save it for later. Documenting the abuse can also help you make or update a safety plan.

Even without knowing how your location is being tracked, you can document what's happening. What has the abusive person said that indicates they know your location? When and where have they showed up when you didn't expect them? What else do you know or suspect that makes you think you're being tracked? Be as specific as possible.

- If you know how you're being tracked, take pictures or screenshots, if possible. Some technology will have traces or records of someone else's access to your location information.
- If you show someone else what's happening, make a note of who it was and when you told them.

Finding the Device or Service

Check for hidden GPS devices or other location tracking services in your belongings or vehicle.

- In your car, check in the boot, under the hood and grill, inside the bumper, and under and between the seats. You could ask a trusted mechanic or police to see if they can find the device.
- In your belongings, look for any items that don't belong to you; remember that a device can be as small as a dollar coin. For gifts that are non-electronic (such as a toy), look for any electronic parts that shouldn't be part of the toy.

Reporting the Abuse

- Victim service providers and advocates can help you explore options for reporting to police, a court, or through any other formal process.
- Consider notifying police if it feels safe to do so. Their capacity to investigate your complaint may vary depending on resources and knowledge.

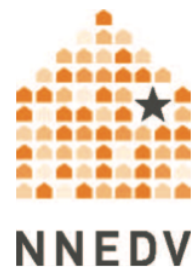
- Get help from a lawyer or legal aid organisation. You may also consider seeking a protection order on your own or with the support of an advocate or legal representative.
- You could also contact the company to request that the abusive person's access to your location is removed or get more information on how to gain more control over your location sharing.

Removing, Blocking, or Jamming

- If safe, you can remove the tracking device or turn off location sharing.
- You can decide when to keep the location tracking working and when to turn it off as part of your safety plan.
- Some counter-surveillance equipment will "jam," or stop, the communication of a location tracking device, but this may also stop other signals, such as phone communication.

Acknowledgement

This handout has been adapted under licence from content originally created by the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV).



More Information

We update our materials frequently. Please visit [TechSafety.org.au](https://www.techsafety.org.au) for the latest version of this and other materials.