

## The Biggest Changes And Development Points In The 28 Revisions To Google Privacy Policy

- **The Original: June 6, 1999**

- The original June 6, 1999, Privacy Policy is less than one page. It lays out the privacy and data Google collects from users as a sensitive concern.
  - Google will not disclose identifiable information to any third party without receiving the customer's permission.
  - Google releases information to third parties in the aggregate and not as individuals.
  - Beyond the initial search and result click, Google and the cookies they use, do not track a user and the user's data and sharing enters the control of that site owner. Google's Cookies "store personal preferences and user data" to identify unique user without connecting personal information like name and home address.

- **The Fifth Edition: October 14, 2005**

- The fifth revision of Google's Privacy plan, effective October 14, 2005, simplified much of the existing policy into easier to read and user-friendly terms.
  - This update "reflects Google's expansion beyond its core search engine business," and includes some targeted language on how the company will protect against abuses.
  - A notable addition to the "Information Security" section is: "These individuals [Google employees, contractors and agents] are bound by confidentiality obligations and may be subject to discipline, including termination and criminal prosecution, if they fail to meet these obligations." These defined consequences create a picture of a stricter policy that provides more protection for the users; however, the policy also increases some key personal information that Google can collect and store.
  - The biggest addition to the "information we collect and how we use it" section is the inclusion of "User communications." The section reads, "When you send email or other communication to Google, we may retain those communications in order to process your inquiries, respond to your requests and improve our services." When linked to Google's ability to use personal information in the "display of customized content and advertising," this new access takes on a much more intrusive feel.
  - User's personal communications are being processed and stored, for an unidentified period, on servers around the world for both Google and their advertisers.

- **The Eight Edition: March 11, 2009**

- On March 11, 2009, Google enacted its eighth version of its privacy policy.
  - As Google’s products and services continued to expand this version of the policy introduces the “Gadgets” language to the “Information we collect and how we use it” section. The language incorporates any information Google collects through enabled gadgets or applications into this policy.
  - For the first time, Google states that it receives and stores “Location data” from its users. Location-enabled services, “such as Google Maps for mobile,” receive GPS and other signals can give Google information about a user’s actual location. This information is then added to the already large pool for information that targets content and advertising to the particular user.

- **The Eleventh Edition: March 1, 2012**

- On March 1, 2012, the eleventh edition of the Google Privacy Policy went into effect.
  - This version of the policy consolidated roughly 60 separate privacy policies for different Google owned products and services into one document.
  - In its official Google Blog’s post on February 29, 2012, Google stated “We aren’t collecting any new or additional information about users. We won’t be selling your personal data. And we will continue to employ industry-leading security to keep your information safe.” However, Privacy International describes this change stating, “By bringing them [the myriad of privacy policies] altogether under one regime, the risk of vagueness increases. A privacy policy may become even more pointless for everyone involved.” (“Thoughts on Google's policy changes, *Piracy International Blog*, February 12, 2012)
  - The main impact the new policy had in practice was increasing the ability for cross-platform sharing, creating one identity per user so Google can “treat you as a single person” across all its platforms. The new language in the policy reads: “We may combine personal information from one service with information, including personal information, from other Google services—for examples to make it easier to share things with people you know. We will not combine DoubleClick cookie information with personally identifiable information unless we have your opt-in consent.”
  - This wealth of access and cooperation across applications and devices will essentially enable advertisers to “know what you’re doing right now—like

literally this second—and serve you ads based on that.” (Stampler, Laura, “Here's The Crucial Part Of Google's New Privacy Policy That Has Advertisers Drooling,” *Business Insider*, January 25, 2012)

- The result of this consolidation is the limitation of the opt-out. While Google would argue that nothing changed and the ability to opt-out and delete accounts and information is still available to its users, in reality users were “losing the ability to manage and maintain different identities within the massive Google World” (Gideon, Thomas and Lowery, James, “The Real Problem With Google’s New Privacy Policy,” *Slate*, February 10, 2012).

- **The Sixteenth Edition: December 19, 2014**

- On December 19, 2014, the sixteenth version of the privacy policy adds YouTube throughout the entirety of the policy.
  - YouTube use is now explicitly described as a source of information on use and interest that Google can use to advertise and better understand the user.
  - While Google owned YouTube and it was included under the 11<sup>th</sup> edition, previously discussed, this direct discussion and addition of one of the most popular video hosting service is still noteworthy.

- **The Twenty-Third Edition: June 28, 2016**

- The most recent significant change to the Google Privacy Policy went into effect on June 28, 2016.
  - This version deletes the previous language on DoubleClick: “We will not combine DoubleClick cookie information with personally identifiable information unless we have your opt-in consent.”
  - The revised language reads: “Depending on your account settings, your activity on other sites and apps may be associated with your personal information in order to improve Google’s services and ads delivered by Google.”
  - This opens the door to allow personally identifiable information into the hands of advertisers. ProPublica’s Julia Angwin wrote “The practical result of the change is that the DoubleClick ads that follow people around on the web may now be customized to them based on the keywords they used in their Gmail. It also means that Google could now, if it wished to, build a complete portrait of a user by name, based on everything they write in email, every website they visit and the searches they conduct.” {Angwin, Julia, “Google Has Quietly Dropped Ban on Personally Identifiable Web Tracking,” *ProPublica*, October 21, 2016)

- **Current Version, Twenty-Eighth: December 18, 2017**
  - Nearly five pages. Eliminates some of the language on updating and correcting personal information.