

Google Faces Heat Over New Privacy Policy

Google is preparing for changes in its privacy policy beginning March first. The company says it plans to replace more than sixty separate policies for different products with one main policy.

Privacy activists criticized last month's announcement. They are concerned that the new policy will make it easier to track the activities of users across Google's many products -- from Gmail to YouTube.

Marc Rotenberg heads the Electronic Privacy Information Center in Washington. He says Google's aim is to create a single unified profile of its users.

"We believe that not only is that a threat to privacy, we actually believe it is illegal, because last year Google entered into an agreement with the U.S. Federal Trade Commission in which they said they would not engage in that kind of data sharing without the explicit permission of their users."

Google says its new policy will make it simpler for users to share information across services like Google Search, Gmail and Google Calendar. And it says the new policy will help personalize each user's experience. Over time, it says, users can expect to see better search results, fewer unwanted advertisements and more content targeted to their interests.

But Marc Rotenberg says in return, people who choose to use Google will lose control over the information they share.

"The type of information you might provide for an e-mail service, for example, such as your address book, which contains private information, is different from the type of information that you might provide for a social network service where people purposely make



information publicly available to their friends." Mr. Rotenberg says these two kinds of services should be kept separate.

"By trying to combine these two services, in our view, Google is actually undermining a very well established expectation of privacy, particularly for popular Internet services like electronic mail."

Critics also see a bigger problem with Google's new policy. The plan would not give users a choice to "opt-out" of the data sharing.

"In our view, if people want to make their personal information available, they certainly should have the right to do that. What we're objecting to is the effort by the company to take away from the users that choice that they should have. That just seems unfair."

Google says it will not be collecting any more data than it does now. And it says users will still be able to control many privacy settings. For example, they can disable their search history and set Gmail chat to "off the record."

European Union officials have asked the company to delay the new policy to make sure it would not violate any E.U. data protection laws. Marc Rotenberg thinks the Federal Trade Commission in Washington might also try to block the new policy.

Welcome to Voice of America's Special English Article Activity

This worksheet is designed to be used with: *Google Faces Heat Over New Privacy Policy*.

Level: beginner - intermediate

Time: 20 minutes

This worksheet will help you learn new vocabulary about Google's privacy policy. You will answer questions about the policy, and write a short paragraph on your opinion about online privacy.

1. What is the opposite of *private*?

- friendly
- public
- hidden

2. What is a *policy*?

- the rules
- an opinion
- a thought

3. Look again at the title of the article: *Google Faces Heat Over New Privacy Policy*. What sentence is true?

- Google is changing its policy
- Google's policy is staying the same

4. Read the sentence below. Is it *true* or *false*? If it is false, correct the sentence.

Google currently has 60 separate policies for different products.

5. Why are some people concerned about Google's new privacy policy?

6. Why does Google say the new policy is good?

7. Read what Marc Rotenborg says. Do you agree with his concerns?

8. Complete the following sentence with *will* or *will not*.

Google says it _____ be collecting any more data than it does now.

9. Why does the European Union want Google to delay the new policy?

10. With a partner, discuss your opinion about privacy laws. Are you concerned about your privacy online?

OVER TO YOU

Think about your answers to question 10 above. Write 5 sentences about the discussion you had with your partner.

ANSWER KEY

- 1.** public
- 2.** the rules
- 3.** Google is changing its policy
- 4.** true
- 5.** They are concerned that the new policy will make it easier to track the activities of users across Google's many products -- from Gmail to YouTube.
- 6.** it will be simpler for users to share information across Google services; users can personalize their experience; better search results; unwanted advertisements; more content targeted to their interests
- 7.** students' own answers
- 8.** will not
- 9.** to make sure it would not violate any E.U. data protection laws.
- 10.** students' own answers