

Lock Down Your AI Privacy

Step-by-step settings for Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini — so your conversations stay as private as possible and aren't used to train the AI.

THE HONEST BOTTOM LINE

None of these three platforms can promise that literally no human will ever see your conversation. Every one of them keeps the right to review chats for safety, fraud, or abuse—no matter what privacy settings you choose. What these settings DO control is whether your everyday conversations are used to train the AI, how long they're stored, and whether they show up in a saved history someone else could stumble across. Treat these steps as “closing the blinds,” not “building a vault.” For anything truly sensitive (SSNs, medical records, passwords, financial account numbers), the safest setting is simply: don't type it in at all.

1. Claude (Free, Pro & Max)

The good news: for Claude's consumer plans, using your chats to train the AI is opt-in, not opt-out. Unless you've deliberately turned it on, your conversations are already not being used for model training.

Step 1 — Check (and turn off) the model-training setting

1. Click your name/avatar in the bottom-left corner of Claude.ai.
2. Select “Settings.”
3. Click the “Privacy” tab (or go directly to claude.ai/settings/data-privacy-controls).
4. Find “Help Improve our AI models” and make sure the toggle is OFF.

Turning this off means: “we will not use any new chats and coding sessions you have with Claude for future model training.” It does not retroactively delete chats already used before you switched it off.

Step 2 — Use Incognito chat for anything extra-sensitive

Incognito chats are never used to improve Claude — even if your Model Improvement setting is turned ON. Use this any time you want a one-off guarantee without having to check your account-wide setting.

1. Start a new chat as usual.
2. Look for the Incognito option when starting the conversation (icon/toggle near the message box) and switch it on before you begin typing.

Step 3 — Know what happens to your data over time

- ☐ If model training is OFF (the default): your chats are stored under Anthropic's standard privacy policy and are not used to train future models.

- ☐ If model training is ON: chats may be retained in a de-identified format for up to 5 years as part of training data.
- ☐ Deleting a conversation removes it from your visible history immediately, and it is fully purged from Anthropic's back-end systems within 30 days.
- ☐ Regardless of your settings, Anthropic can still review conversations flagged for safety or Usage Policy violations.

Step 4 — Delete what you don't need

Open any conversation, find the delete/rename option, and remove chats you no longer need. You can also export or delete your entire account's data from the Privacy settings tab.

2. ChatGPT (Free, Plus & Pro)

The opposite default from Claude: on ChatGPT's consumer plans, "Improve the model for everyone" is ON by default. You need to actively switch it off if you don't want your chats used for training.

Step 1 — Turn off model training

If you're signed in:

1. Click your profile icon (top-right or in the sidebar).
2. Select "Settings."
3. Go to "Data Controls."
4. Toggle OFF "Improve the model for everyone."

On mobile:

1. Open the sidebar menu.
2. Tap your profile icon, then "Settings."
3. Go to "Data Controls" and toggle it off.

If you're not signed in (rare, but included for completeness):

1. Click the "?" icon in the bottom-right corner.
2. Select "Settings" and toggle off "Improve the model for everyone."

Step 2 — Use Temporary Chat for one-off sensitive conversations

Temporary Chats don't save to your history, don't build a "memory" profile, aren't used to train the model, and are deleted after 30 days. OpenAI notes they "may only be reviewed to monitor for abuse."

Turn it on from the new-chat screen — look for the Temporary Chat toggle near the message box before you start typing.

Step 3 — Know what happens to your data over time

- ☐ Temporary Chats: deleted after 30 days, never used for training.
- ☐ Standard chats with training OFF: stay in your visible chat history indefinitely (until you delete them) but are not used to improve the model.
- ☐ Standard chats with training ON (the default): used to improve future models.
- ☐ Regardless of your setting, OpenAI can still review flagged conversations to monitor for abuse or policy violations.

Step 4 — Delete what you don't need

You can delete individual chats from your sidebar, or go to Settings → Data Controls to delete all conversations at once.

3. Gemini (Google Account)

Gemini's privacy setting lives inside your Google Account's activity controls, not inside the Gemini app itself — and like ChatGPT, it defaults to ON.

Step 1 — Turn off "Keep Activity"

1. Go to myactivity.google.com/product/gemini (or, in the Gemini app, tap your profile picture → "Activity").
2. Find the "Keep Activity" toggle.
3. Turn it OFF.

With Keep Activity off: your conversations are auto-deleted after 72 hours, and are not used to train Google's AI models unless you separately submit feedback (like a thumbs-up/down with comments) on a specific response.

Step 2 — Turn off audio/video retention separately (if you use Gemini Live)

There is a separate toggle in the same Gemini Apps Activity settings controlling whether audio recordings and Live video/screen-share sessions are used for service improvement. It is off by default, but it's worth confirming if you use voice or video features.

Step 3 — Know what happens to your data over time

- ☐ Keep Activity OFF: 72-hour retention, no training use (unless you give feedback), but Google can still review chats for safety and terms enforcement.
- ☐ Keep Activity ON (the default): auto-deletes after 18 months by default — adjustable to 3 months, 36 months, or never — and is used to train and improve Google's AI, with a subset reviewed by human reviewers for quality and safety.

Step 4 — Delete what you don't need

From the same Gemini Apps Activity page, you can delete individual conversations or clear your entire activity history at any time.

4. Side-by-Side Comparison

	Claude	ChatGPT	Gemini
Default: is my data used for training?	No — training is off unless you opt in	Yes on Free/Plus by default — must opt out	Yes by default (“Keep Activity” on) — must opt out
Where the switch lives	Settings → Privacy → “Help Improve our AI models”	Settings → Data Controls → “Improve the model for everyone”	myactivity.google.com/product/gemini → “Keep Activity”
One-tap private mode	Incognito chat (never trains the model, any settings)	Temporary Chat (not saved, not trained on)	None — must turn off Keep Activity account-wide
Data kept if you opt out / turn off	Normal retention; never used for training	30 days, then deleted	72 hours, then deleted
Data kept if you opt in / leave on	Up to 5 years, de-identified	Kept in history indefinitely unless you delete it	18 months by default (you can change to 3, 36, or never auto-delete)
Can staff ever see my chats?	Yes — for abuse/safety review, regardless of setting	Yes — for abuse/safety review, regardless of setting	Yes — human reviewers see a subset, regardless of setting

5. Bring It Back to the 5 Golden Rules

These settings connect directly to Golden Rule 2 from the AI Safety Essentials workshop: even with every control turned on, assume your information could still be seen by someone else. Turning off model training and shortening retention meaningfully reduces your exposure — it does not eliminate it.

TRY THIS THIS WEEK

Pick the one AI tool you use most often and walk through its settings today using the steps above. It takes about two minutes and it's the single highest-leverage privacy action most people never get around to.

Sources

Source: *How do I change my model improvement privacy settings?* — Anthropic Privacy Center
<https://privacy.claude.com/en/articles/12109829-how-do-i-change-my-model-improvement-privacy-settings>

Source: *Is my data used for model training? (Consumers)* — Anthropic Privacy Center
<https://privacy.claude.com/en/articles/10023580-is-my-data-used-for-model-training>

Source: *How long do you store my data?* — Anthropic Privacy Center <https://privacy.claude.com/en/articles/10023548-how-long-do-you-store-my-data>

Source: *Can you delete data sent via Claude?* — Anthropic Privacy Center <https://privacy.claude.com/en/articles/7996878-can-you-delete-data-sent-via-claude>

Source: *Data Controls FAQ* — OpenAI Help Center <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/7730893-data-controls-faq>

Source: *Manage & delete your Gemini Apps activity* — Google Help <https://support.google.com/gemini/answer/13594961>

Note: Company privacy settings and menu labels change over time. If a step above doesn't match what you see, search the platform's own help center for "data controls" or "privacy settings" to find the current version.

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