



An Extended Guide · No. 1874

Does Your Robot Vacuum Have a Camera? Privacy Settings to Check

A calm, honest look at
what your robot sees

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Does your robot have an eye — and who can see through it?

A robot vacuum rolls through every room you own, and some of them carry a camera. That's a fair thing to wonder about. This guide tells you, in plain language, which robots see your home, what they may record, and the simple settings that keep your privacy yours.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping folks feel at ease with the gear in their homes. I'll treat this the way I'd treat it at your kitchen table — honestly, calmly, and without trying to scare you.

Here's the reassuring part up front: most robot vacuums are not spying on you, and the ones with cameras usually give you switches to control them. The trick is simply knowing what to look for and where the settings live. That's all this guide does.

★ Worried but not sure what to check?

If you'd like someone to sit down with you and go through your robot's privacy settings one by one, that's exactly the kind of thing I do on a visit. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 — no judgment, no jargon.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you'll have your privacy well in hand.

- ❑ Laser-only robots (LiDAR) do not photograph your rooms — they map with light, not pictures.
- ❑ Camera robots use the lens to dodge obstacles, and some add a 'home patrol' feature that lets you view live video from your phone.
- ❑ What a robot may store: a map of your home, usage data, and — on camera models — photos or video.
- ❑ The settings to find: turn the camera off or cover it, limit data sharing, put a PIN on remote viewing, and delete stored data.
- ❑ Some robots can run mostly offline, with little or no cloud — worth seeking out if privacy matters most to you.
- ❑ Placement matters: keep a camera robot out of bedrooms and bathrooms during the day if that gives you peace of mind.

✓ One rule to hold onto

If a robot can show you live video on your phone, then in theory that same video could travel over the internet. That's not a reason to panic — it's a reason to set a good PIN and know where the off switch is.

The first question: camera or laser?

Robots find their way in two broad ways, and the difference is the heart of this whole topic.

Laser (LiDAR) robots

These map your home with a small spinning laser on top. It measures distance with light — think of it as feeling the walls in the dark. A laser-only robot takes no pictures of your rooms at all. If the idea of a camera roaming your home bothers you, this is the kind to favor.

Camera (vSLAM) robots

These use a lens to see where they are and, on many newer models, to spot and dodge obstacles like cords, socks, and pet messes. The camera is doing a real job — better obstacle avoidance — but it does mean a lens is looking at your home.

✓ A robot can have both

Plenty of robots pair a laser for mapping with a small camera for dodging obstacles. Having a camera is not bad in itself — it just means there are a few more settings worth a look, which we'll walk through together.

The 'home patrol' feature — a camera on wheels

A growing number of robots offer a feature that turns the vacuum into a roving security camera. It's genuinely useful — and the single biggest privacy item to understand.

With a 'home patrol' or 'remote view' feature, you can open the app while you're away and drive the robot around to look in on the house, the pets, or a door you weren't sure you locked. The live picture travels from your home, over the internet, to your phone.

That's a handy thing when you want it. The flip side is plain: a camera you can reach from anywhere is a camera someone else might reach if your account is weak. The fix is not to fear the feature — it's to protect the account behind it.

! Protect the account, not just the robot

If your robot offers remote viewing, use a strong, unique password, turn on two-step verification if it's offered, and set any available viewing PIN. A roving camera is only as private as the account that unlocks it.

What a robot may record and send

Let's be specific about what actually leaves your home, so there's no mystery. It falls into three plain buckets.

- **A map of your home** — the floor plan the robot builds so it can clean in tidy rows and let you set no-go zones. Most mapping robots store this, often in the maker's cloud.
- **Usage data** — when and how long it cleaned, errors, battery health, and the like. This is how the app shows you history and how the maker improves the product.
- **Photos or video** — only on camera models. Obstacle photos may be used to improve dodging; remote-view video is live when you ask for it. Laser-only robots have none of this.

None of this is automatically sinister. But you have a right to know it exists, and a right to control it. The next pages show you how.

✓ The map is data too

A floor plan of your home is personal in its own way — it reveals your layout and room sizes. Even on a laser-only robot, it's worth knowing the map is stored and can usually be deleted if you ever want it gone.

The privacy settings to check — a short tour

Nearly every robot with a camera buries a handful of privacy switches in its app. Here are the ones worth finding.

- **Camera on/off:** many apps let you disable the camera, or switch off obstacle-recognition photos, while still letting the robot clean.
- **Remote view PIN:** a separate code or extra confirmation before anyone can see live video. Turn it on.
- **Data sharing:** an option to opt out of sharing images or usage data to 'improve the product.' You can usually say no and still clean.
- **Delete my data:** buttons to erase the stored map, clear history, or delete your account's data entirely.
- **Two-step verification:** an extra login step that keeps strangers out of the account even if they learn your password.

★ I'll find every one of these with you

App menus move around and the privacy settings are rarely on the front screen. On a visit I'll walk through your robot's app and set each of these the way you want — once, so you don't have to hunt. Call (330) 200-8042.

When in doubt, cover the lens

Software switches are good, but some folks sleep better with a physical barrier they can see. That's a perfectly sensible instinct.

Some camera robots ship with a little sliding shutter or a cap over the lens for exactly this reason. If yours has one, you can close it when you don't need obstacle avoidance or patrol, and open it when you do.

If yours has no built-in cover, a small piece of opaque tape over the lens works too — just know it may reduce the robot's ability to dodge obstacles, since that's the camera's day job. It's a trade-off you get to make, not the maker.

✓ A cover beats a worry

There is nothing silly about covering a camera you don't trust. A lens you can physically see is blocked gives a certainty no menu setting can. If it lets you relax in your own home, it's worth it.

Robots that keep more to themselves

If privacy is your top concern, you can lean toward robots designed to run mostly on their own, with little or no cloud.

Some robots offer 'local' control — the map and the brains live on the robot or your home network rather than the maker's distant servers. A laser-only robot that you run from its buttons or a local app is about as private as a robot vacuum gets.

The trade-off is usually convenience: cloud features like remote patrol, voice assistants, and automatic software updates may be limited or absent. For many folks who just want clean floors, that's a trade worth making — and a quieter one, too.

✓ Ask before you buy

If offline, low-cloud operation matters to you, make it a shopping question: 'Does this robot work without sending my data to the cloud?' The answer, and how plainly they'll give it, tells you a lot.

Placement: keep the camera out of private rooms

A simple, free privacy tool is deciding where the robot is allowed to go — and when.

On a mapping robot you can set no-go zones to keep it out of the bedroom or bathroom entirely, or schedule those rooms to clean only when you're up and about. A camera can't film a room the robot never enters.

The same thinking applies to timing. If you'd rather a camera robot not roam while you're sleeping or getting dressed, set its schedule for the middle of the day. You're in charge of the when as much as the where.

★ Let's map the private rooms off-limits

Setting no-go zones around bedrooms and bathrooms, and a schedule that suits your day, is a quick job I'm glad to do on a visit. You decide the rules; I'll set them in the app. Call (330) 200-8042.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Privacy means different things to different folks. Picture which of these sounds more like you — the settings you reach for will differ.

The 'I just want clean floors' owner

If you have no interest in watching video of your home and simply want the floors done, your path is short and simple.

- Favor a laser-only robot — no camera, no room photos, full stop.
- If yours has a camera, turn it off or cover it and clean away.
- Opt out of data sharing; you lose nothing you'll miss.
- Skip the patrol feature entirely — less to set, less to worry about.

The 'I like checking in on the house' owner

If the roving-camera feature appeals to you — to check on pets or a locked door — you can enjoy it safely with a few guardrails.

- Use a strong, unique password and turn on two-step verification.
- Set the remote-view PIN so no one views live video casually.
- Review who has access to the account, and remove old devices.
- Know where the camera off switch and data-delete button live.

★ Not sure which you are?

Most folks are somewhere in between, and that's fine. Tell me how you'd like to use the robot and how private you want to be, and I'll set it up to match. Call (330) 200-8042.

Making sense of the privacy policy

Nobody enjoys reading a privacy policy, and you don't have to read all of it. A few plain questions get you the answers that matter.

- **What is collected?** Look for whether images or video are stored, and whether a map leaves your home.
- **Where does it go?** The maker's cloud, other companies, or stays local? Who else gets to see it?
- **Can I opt out?** There should be a way to say no to image or data sharing and still use the robot.
- **Can I delete it?** A real company lets you erase your map, history, and account data on request.
- **Who owns the company?** Ownership can change, and with it the rules — worth a thought, as our Roomba guide explains.

✓ Search the page instead of reading it

On a web page, press Ctrl-F (or Cmd-F on a Mac) and search for words like 'camera,' 'image,' 'delete,' or 'share.' It jumps you straight to the parts that actually answer your question.

Who, besides you, can reach the camera

It's worth a calm think about everyone who could, in theory, see through a camera robot. The list is shorter than the worry suggests.

The people you deliberately give access to — a spouse, an adult child — can usually view the robot through a shared account. That's a feature, not a flaw, but it means you should know who's on the account and remove anyone who no longer needs to be.

Beyond that, the real risk is a stranger getting into a weakly protected account, or the maker's own staff and systems. A good password, two-step verification, and a company with a clear privacy policy address all three. This is normal, manageable stuff.

! Clear out old access after a change

After a houseguest, a repair, or a falling-out, take a minute to check who can still reach the robot's account and remove anyone who shouldn't. It's the same good habit as changing a lock.

Buying or selling a robot secondhand

A used robot is a fine way to save money — as long as the old map, account, and data don't come along for the ride.

If you're buying one used, factory-reset it before you trust it: that wipes the previous owner's map and account link so the robot starts fresh with you. Until you do, it may still be tied to a stranger's app.

If you're selling or giving one away, do the same in reverse — reset it and remove it from your account, so your floor plan and history don't leave with the machine. A camera robot especially deserves this care.

★ I'll reset it so it's truly yours

A factory reset and a clean account setup takes just a few minutes, and it makes a used robot genuinely your own with none of the previous owner's data. Happy to handle it on a visit. Call (330) 200-8042.

Voice assistants and the privacy picture

Many robots link to a smart speaker so you can say 'start cleaning.' That adds convenience — and one more account to the picture.

When you connect a robot to Alexa or Google Home, you're letting those systems send commands to the robot. The voice assistant hears your command; it does not see through the robot's camera. The two are separate, and linking them doesn't hand your camera to the speaker company.

Still, each account you connect is a door, and each door wants a good lock. If you link a voice assistant, give that account the same strong password and two-step verification you gave the robot's app.

✓ Fewer connections, fewer worries

If you never plan to say 'start cleaning' out loud, you can simply not link a voice assistant at all. Every connection you skip is one less account to secure. Keep it as simple as suits you.

An honest sense of proportion

I'd be doing you a disservice if I either dismissed your concern or stoked it. Here's my plain, honest read.

A robot vacuum is not the biggest camera in most homes — phones, doorbells, and laptops all carry lenses too. A vacuum's camera sits low, moves slowly, and on most models isn't recording you at all. The sky is not falling.

At the same time, a camera you can reach from your phone is a real camera, and it deserves the same care as any connected device. The right response is neither fear nor shrugging — it's the handful of sensible settings in this guide, done once.

✓ Calm beats both panic and denial

The folks who are happiest with a camera robot are the ones who set it up thoughtfully and then forget about it. A few minutes of good settings buys years of not having to think about it.

A simple privacy checklist

Run through this once when you set up any robot, and you'll have covered the ground that matters.

- ☐ I know whether my robot has a camera, a laser, or both.
- ☐ If it has a camera, I've decided to use it, cover it, or turn it off.
- ☐ The account has a strong, unique password and two-step verification.
- ☐ Remote viewing has a PIN, or is turned off if I don't use it.
- ☐ I've opted out of image or data sharing I don't want.
- ☐ Bedrooms and bathrooms are no-go zones or scheduled for daytime.
- ☐ I know where to delete the map and my data if I ever want to.
- ☐ A used robot was factory-reset before I trusted it.

✓ Keep this with the manual

Tuck a copy of this checklist in with your robot's manual. If you ever change robots, change homes, or sell the machine, it's a two-minute refresher instead of a fresh worry.

Common privacy mistakes — and the easy fixes

A few avoidable slip-ups account for most robot-privacy trouble. Now you'll know them in advance.

- **Reusing an old password** on the robot's account — the single biggest risk. A unique password fixes it.
- **Leaving remote view wide open** with no PIN or two-step login — a quick setting closes the door.
- **Never checking who has access** after guests or a shared account — clear out old devices now and then.
- **Buying used without a reset** — the old owner's map and account may still be attached.
- **Assuming laser robots take photos** — they don't; a little knowledge saves needless worry.

! The password is the whole ballgame

If you do only one thing from this guide, give the robot's account a strong, unique password and turn on two-step verification. Most privacy scares trace back to a weak or reused password, not the robot itself.

When the maker changes hands

Here's a privacy angle folks don't think of: the rules can change if the company that made your robot is sold.

Your data lives under whatever privacy policy the current owner sets. If the company is bought — as has happened in the robot-vacuum world lately — the new owner may, over time, change how data is handled, where it's stored, or what the app does. That's not a reason to panic, but it is a reason to stay a little watchful.

Roomba's maker, iRobot, went through exactly this kind of change, and it set up a separate US-based arm to handle data concerns. Our Roomba guide covers what that means for owners — and the same watchfulness applies to any robot whose maker changes hands.

✓ Watch for app changes after a sale

If you hear your robot's maker has been sold, keep an eye out for changes to the app's privacy settings or terms. New owners sometimes reset preferences — a quick re-check keeps your choices intact.

Setting a new robot up the private way

If you're starting fresh, a few choices at setup time save you fiddling later. Here's the order I'd go in.

First, create the account with a strong, unique password and turn on two-step verification right away — it's easiest before you forget. Then, before you run the first full clean, step through the privacy menu and set data sharing, camera, and remote-view options to your liking.

Last, draw your no-go zones and set a schedule that keeps the robot out of private rooms when you'd rather it stayed out. Do these three things at setup and you rarely need to touch them again.

★ A private setup, done once

Setting up a robot the private way is a one-time job, and it's a favorite of mine — strong account, privacy menu set, private rooms fenced off. I'll do it with you so every choice is yours. Call (330) 200-8042.

Questions to ask before you buy

Whether you're talking to a salesperson or to me, these questions get you to a robot you can trust in your home.

Q: Does this robot have a camera, and what does it do?

Ask whether the camera is for obstacle avoidance, remote patrol, or both — or whether it's a laser-only robot with no camera at all.

Q: Can I turn the camera off and still clean?

A good robot lets you disable the camera or obstacle photos and keep vacuuming. If it can't, weigh whether you want that camera always on.

Q: Does it work without sending my data to the cloud?

If offline, low-cloud operation matters to you, ask plainly. Laser-only robots with local control are the most private option.

Q: How do I delete my map and my data?

There should be a clear way to erase the stored map, history, and account data. If the answer is vague, that tells you something.

✓ There's no silly question

If a salesperson brushes off a privacy question or makes you feel foolish for asking, that's a reason to walk away, not to buy. Your home, your rules, your right to a plain answer.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most from folks worried about a robot vacuum and privacy, answered plainly.

Q: Is my robot vacuum watching me?

Almost certainly not. Laser-only robots take no pictures at all, and camera robots mostly use the lens to dodge obstacles. Only the remote patrol feature shows live video, and only when you ask it to.

Q: Which robot is the most private?

A laser-only (LiDAR) robot with local, low-cloud control. It maps with light instead of pictures and keeps more of its data at home. If privacy is your top concern, that's the kind to favor.

Q: Can someone hack into my robot's camera?

The real risk is a stranger getting into a weakly protected account. A strong, unique password plus two-step verification closes that door for the vast majority of people.

Q: Can I just cover the camera?

Yes. Some robots have a built-in shutter; otherwise a small piece of opaque tape works. Know it may reduce obstacle avoidance, since that's the camera's job — but it's your call to make.

★ Still uneasy? Let's settle it together

Privacy worries are worth taking seriously, and they're easy to put to rest once someone shows you the settings. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll go through your robot one switch at a time.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made robot vacuum camera and privacy settings feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. I'll help you choose the right machine, get it set up and mapped, connect it to your Wi-Fi and your phone, and show you how to run it. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site — app settings, schedules, a quick question — I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. For anything that calls for a ladder, wiring, or digging, I'll help you line up a trustworthy local pro rather than risk it.

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Does It Photograph Your Rooms?

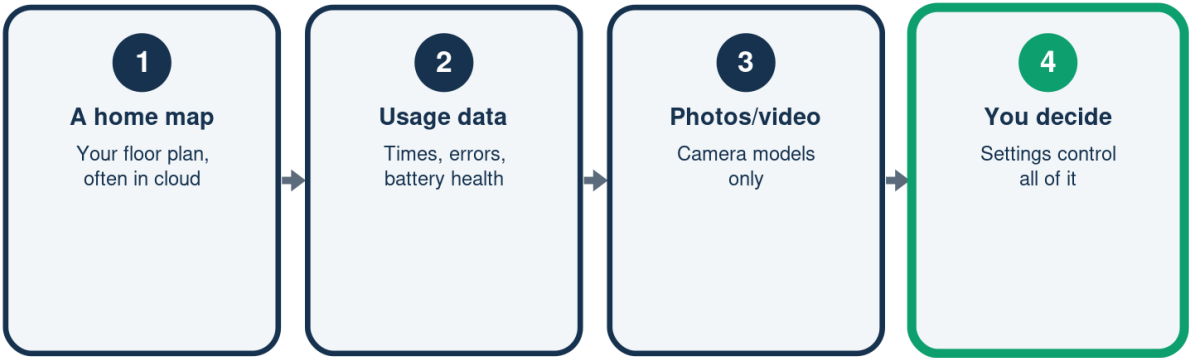
The camera-versus-laser difference, at a glance

	Robot type	What it sees
Laser (LiDAR)	Maps with light,	no room photos
Camera (vSLAM)	Lens dodges	obstacles
Home patrol	Live video to	your phone
Laser + camera	Map by laser,	dodge by lens

Laser-only robots take no pictures of your home.

What May Leave Your Home

Three plain buckets of robot data



You can opt out and delete, on most robots.

The Privacy Switches to Find

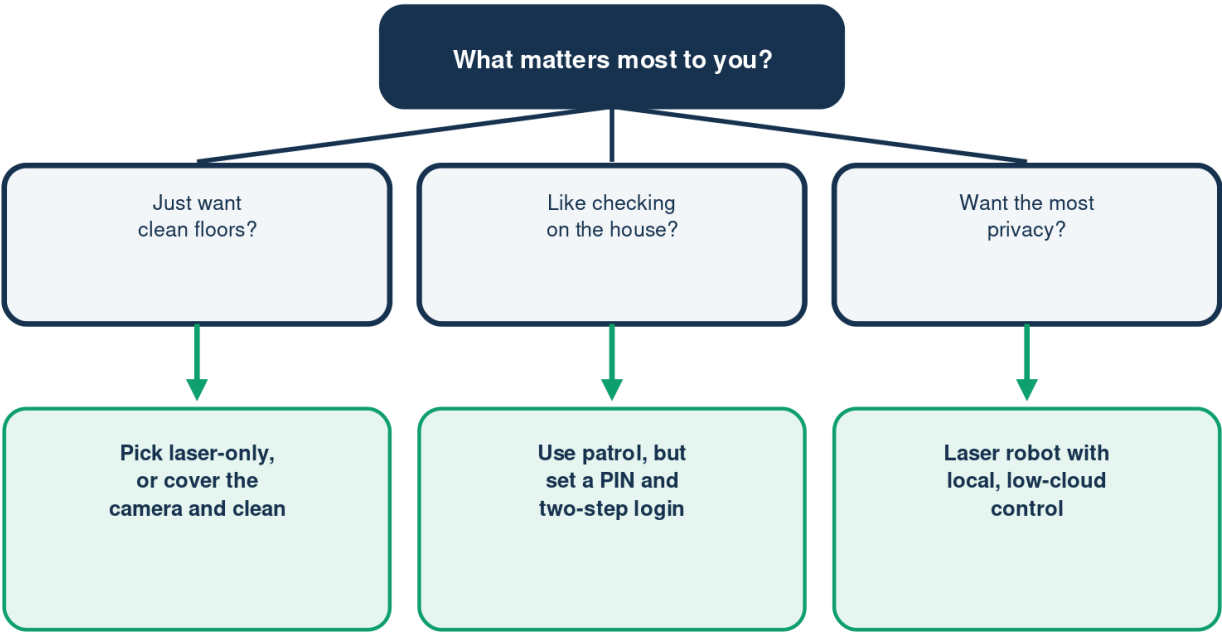
Nearly every camera robot buries these in its app

Setting		What it does
Camera off	Stop photos,	still clean
Remote PIN	Locks live	viewing
Data sharing	Opt out of	'improve' uploads
Delete data	Erase map	and history
Two-step login	Keeps strangers	out

Set these once and you rarely touch them again.

How Private Do You Want to Be?

Let your comfort level pick the path



A strong, unique password is the one step everyone should take.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

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