BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 2000

Updated November 2026

Off-Facebook Activity — Stopping the Web From Following You Into Facebook

Stopping the web from following you into Facebook

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

Book a visit · billshometech.com/book

What's Inside

Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now.

The Short Version 3
What Off-Facebook Activity Really Means 3
How Other Sites Report Back 4
Why It Is Worth Your Few Minutes 4
Finding Accounts Center 5
Clearing Your Past Activity 5
Disconnecting Future Activity 6
Will You Still See Ads? 6
Instagram, Phones and Computers 7
If You Cannot Find the Setting 7
What Counts, and Why the List Is So Long 8
Finer Controls and Background Apps 9
Pairing It With Your Browser 9
What This Does Not Cover 10
Common Mistakes and Questions 10
Everyday Cheat Sheet 12
A Note From Bill 13
Your Visit — and My Promise 14

1 The Short Version

Many of the apps and websites you use send a record of what you did back to Facebook — the fact that you looked at a product, read an article, or visited a store. Facebook calls this your off-Facebook, or off-Meta, activity. The good news is you can see the list, clear everything on it with one button, and then turn off the future collection so it stops building back up.

- It all lives in a part of your settings called Accounts Center, and the whole job takes only a few minutes.
- Clearing does not reduce the number of ads you see. What it changes is how uncannily they are aimed at you.
- There are two switches that matter: clear the past, and disconnect the future. Do both and the job lasts.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> The menu names here are in the middle of changing through 2026, so your screen may not match this guide word for word. The ideas stay the same even when the labels move — look for the words, not an exact match.

2 What Off-Facebook Activity Really Means

The name is a little confusing, so let me unpack it. Off-Facebook activity is everything you do away from Facebook — on other apps, other websites, other stores — that those businesses choose to report back to Facebook about you. It is not about what you post or click while on Facebook itself; it is about the trail you leave elsewhere that follows you in.

That is why it surprises people: they expect Facebook to know what they do on Facebook, not what they do at an unrelated shoe store. "Off-Facebook" means away from Facebook, on other sites. "Activity" means the actions those sites report about you. Facebook also calls it off-Meta activity, since Meta is the company that owns it.

3 How Other Sites Report Back

You might wonder how a random website even knows to tell Facebook about you. The answer is a small piece of invisible code that many businesses add to their sites and apps, provided by Facebook, that quietly reports visits and actions back. When you are signed in to Facebook — even in another browser tab — that code can connect what you did on the other site to your Facebook account.

It happens in the background, with no notice to you, which is exactly why the whole thing feels invisible until you go looking. This is the same behind-the-scenes reporting that makes a product you glanced at once seem to chase you around the internet. Facebook is one of the biggest destinations for it, but not the only one.

4 Why It Is Worth Your Few Minutes

You might reasonably ask whether this is worth bothering about. For many people it is more unsettling than dangerous, but there are solid reasons to take the few minutes. You do not need to feel alarmed — you simply deserve to decide whether your off-Facebook life quietly feeds your Facebook ads, rather than having that decided for you by default.

- It stops the eerie feeling of being followed from store to feed.
- It shrinks the detailed profile businesses can build about your habits.
- It reduces how much of your real-world shopping and reading is tied to your name.
- It gives you a clear, satisfying sense of having taken back a bit of control.

5 Finding Accounts Center

Everything for this lives in a section called Accounts Center, which is the shared control room for Facebook, Instagram, and Meta's other apps. Getting there is the only slightly fiddly part, so take it slowly.

1. Open your Facebook settings (tap your picture or the menu, then Settings & privacy, then Settings).
2. Find and open Accounts Center near the top.
3. Look under Your information and permissions for your activity off Meta technologies (older screens may call it Off-Facebook activity).
4. Open it to see the list of businesses that have reported about you.

WATCH OUT

Do not try to understand every single entry. The list is often enormous and the descriptions thin. The useful move is not to study it but to clear it and disconnect it, which the next chapters cover.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

6 Clearing Your Past Activity

The first of the two main actions is to clear the history that has already been collected. There is usually a button labeled something like "Clear previous activity" or "Clear history."

1. On the off-Meta activity page, find Clear previous activity.
2. Read the short explanation it shows.
3. Confirm by tapping Clear.

4. Wait for it to finish — on a long history it may take a moment.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Clearing unlinks that history from your account. It does not necessarily delete the information from Meta's own records entirely; it severs the connection to you. Think of it as cutting the string between the activity and your name tag, rather than burning the activity itself. For quieting your ads, cutting the string is what counts — Facebook can no longer use that pile of off-site activity to aim ads at you specifically.

7 Disconnecting Future Activity

Clearing handles the past, but new activity would keep flowing in unless you also turn off the future. This second switch is the one that makes the fix last. With both done — past cleared, future disconnected — you have handled the whole feature, and the eerie following-around should fade over the coming days as the old tailoring expires.

1. On the same off-Meta activity page, find Manage future activity.
2. Open it and look for Disconnect future activity.
3. Tap Continue, then confirm.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> If someone promises that any Facebook setting will make the ads disappear, be skeptical. Facebook is an advertising business, so the ads stay. Your control is over how much of you goes into choosing them.

8 Will You Still See Ads?

Yes, and it is important you expect that, so you do not think the steps failed. Facebook has said plainly that this does not reduce the number of ads you see. What changes is how they are chosen. Instead of being aimed using your off-site shopping and browsing, the ads lean on broader, less personal signals — they become more generic, which for most folks is exactly the point. It is the pinpoint targeting, not the ads themselves, that feels invasive.

GOOD TO KNOW

While you are in the settings, it is worth a look at your Ad preferences (sometimes just called Ads). These are a separate set of controls that govern how Facebook uses what it knows from within its own apps — you can review the interests it has assigned you and limit how your profile details are used for ads.

9 Instagram, Phones and Computers

Instagram's off-site activity lives in the very same Accounts Center. Meta pooled the controls for its apps, so if your Facebook and Instagram accounts are linked under one Accounts Center, clearing and disconnecting can cover both at once — a pleasant surprise for many people. If they are separate, simply repeat the steps for each.

- On a phone, you work through the Facebook app's menu.
- On a computer, you work through the website's settings — the larger screen can make the long lists easier.
- Either way, the change applies to your account everywhere.

TIP

If the app's menus feel cramped or keep shifting, try the same task in a web browser on a computer. Sometimes the website lays the options out more plainly than the app does.

10 If You Cannot Find the Setting

Because Meta is renaming these menus through 2026, there is a real chance your screen will not match any guide exactly. A setting that moved is not a setting that vanished — Meta is required to offer this control, so it is there somewhere. Patience and the search box will turn it up.

1. Use the search box in Settings, if there is one, and type "off" or "activity."
2. Look under anything named Accounts Center or Meta Account.

3. Scan for Your information and permissions.
4. If all else fails, search the web for the current name plus the year.

> Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

11 What Counts, and Why the List Is So Long

It helps to know the kinds of things other sites report, because it makes the abstract idea concrete. The reports are usually simple actions, not the full contents of what you did. Each report is a small breadcrumb that means little on its own, but gathered across hundreds of sites over years, the breadcrumbs form a detailed trail — which is why clearing it is worth the few minutes.

- That you visited a particular website or opened an app.
- That you viewed or searched for a certain product.
- That you added something to a cart or made a purchase.
- That you signed up, subscribed, or filled out a form.

The two most noticeable forms are shopping and reading. You look at a jacket, do not buy it, and for days it appears in your feed as if the store is tapping you on the shoulder — that is the shopping follow-around. News sites, blogs, and article pages often carry the same reporting code too, so what you read can feed your profile. Once you clear and disconnect, both kinds of reminder fade.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Do not let a long list send you into a panic or a marathon of reading every entry. A long list does not mean you have been careless — it simply reflects how widespread the practice has become. The healthy response is the two buttons that handle the whole list at once.

12 Finer Controls and Background Apps

Most people want to clear everything, but Facebook also lets you manage individual businesses if you prefer a lighter touch — say, you are happy for one trusted store to personalize but not the rest. On the off-Meta activity page you can tap a specific business, review what it reported, and disconnect just that one if the option is offered. This per-business control is more work and most folks do not bother, but it is there if you want precision.

Some phone apps — especially free apps and games — report activity to Facebook in the background even when you are not actively using Facebook. This is why disconnecting future activity matters as much as clearing the past; it cuts those reports off at your account. While you are tidying up, Facebook may also use your location if you granted its app permission.

1. Open your phone's Settings and find the Facebook app.
2. Open its Location permission.
3. Set it to While Using the App, or to Never if you prefer.

13 Pairing It With Your Browser

Off-Facebook activity reaches you mainly through your web browser, so a little browser care makes the whole fix stronger and more durable. One simple habit helps on its own: signing out of Facebook when you are done, rather than staying permanently logged in, makes it harder for other sites to connect your browsing to your account. Many people stay signed in on their phone's app but sign out in their computer's web browser, where most cross-site tracking happens.

- Turn on your browser's built-in tracking protection where it offers one.
- Clear cookies now and then to break old tracking links — cookies are the small files that let sites recognize you.
- Consider a reputable ad or tracker blocker (covered in its own guide).

- Keep Facebook in one browser and general browsing in another, so they do not mingle.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> None of these are required for the Facebook steps to work, but together they close the side doors so the following-around does not simply find another way in.

14 What This Does Not Cover

So you have a clear picture, let me name the edges. This feature handles the activity other sites report to Facebook — a strong, satisfying piece of the puzzle, but not the whole puzzle. A sensible privacy routine is built one piece at a time, and each of these has its own short guide.

- It does not change what you post or share on Facebook itself.
- It does not affect other companies, like Google, that track you too.
- It does not remove you from data-broker or people-search sites.
- It does not replace a good password and two-step sign-in.

If you rarely use Facebook, there are gentler options beyond the activity settings: you can deactivate temporarily (hides your profile but keeps it recoverable), delete permanently after a grace period, or simply sign out and visit rarely. Even a quiet, rarely-used account can still be tracked through off-site activity, so the cleanup is worthwhile either way. If you help manage accounts for grandchildren or younger relatives, the same steps apply to theirs — done collaboratively, it is also a small, practical privacy lesson.

15 Common Mistakes and Questions

A few things trip people up here. None cause harm — they just leave the job half finished. A careful pass through both switches, on both apps, avoids all of them.

The question or mistake	The plain answer
Cleared the past but ads still feel aimed	You likely forgot to disconnect the future, so it rebuilt. Go back and turn off Manage future activity.
Expected the ads to vanish	They will not — only the targeting changes. That is working as intended, not a failure.
Menu name did not match a guide	Meta renames these through 2026. Use the search box and look for the words, not an exact label.
Did Facebook but not Instagram	Instagram is right there in the same Accounts Center. Confirm both are linked or repeat the steps.
Will this delete my posts or photos?	No. Only the off-site trail is cleared. Your posts, photos and friends are untouched.
Will I get logged out or lose anything?	No. You stay logged in and lose nothing you care about.
Is this the same as deleting my account?	Not at all. Your account remains exactly as it was.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you disconnect future activity it should stay off, but settings can drift after big Facebook updates. A light glance twice a year — tied to a date you already remember, like the change of the clocks in spring and fall — keeps your work from quietly coming undone.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task. The whole heart of it is two buttons: clear the past, disconnect the future.

I want to...	Do this...
Find the setting	Facebook Settings > Accounts Center > Your information and permissions > activity off Meta technologies
Clear what has been collected	Tap Clear previous activity and confirm
Stop it building back up	Open Manage future activity and choose Disconnect future activity
Do it the quick way (5 minutes)	Accounts Center > clear previous activity, then disconnect future activity
Can't find the menu	Use the Settings search box; type "off" or "activity"; look under Accounts Center
Cover Instagram too	It is in the same Accounts Center; confirm the accounts are linked or repeat the steps
Keep it from drifting	Glance twice a year and re-clear anything that slipped back in
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

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 results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

Call or text (330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.