

# Google revising privacy policies, data use

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The Mountain View, California-based [Internet giant](#) said the changes are designed to improve the user experience across the various [Google](#) products, which range from [Web search](#) to Gmail to Google+ to YouTube.

Google said it is combining more than 60 privacy policies for its various services into a single policy that will take effect from March 1.

"We're rolling out a new main privacy policy that covers the majority of our products and explains what information we collect, and how we use

it, in a much more readable way," Alma Whitten, Google's director of privacy, product and engineering, said in a blog post.

"We believe this new, simpler policy will make it easier for people to understand our privacy practices as well as enable Google to improve the services we offer," she said.

Google noted that "regulators globally have been calling for shorter, simpler privacy policies" and said it would inform users of the changes by [email](#) and with a notice on the Google.com home page.

Google has found itself under increasing scrutiny from European and US regulators as it has grown from a scrappy startup into an Internet titan, branching out into various businesses including online mapping, shopping and travel and providing software for mobile phones and [tablet computers](#).

The changes to Google's [privacy policies](#) are certain to draw further attention in Washington and Brussels and announcing them more than a month ahead of time appeared to be a bid to provide time for them to be digested.

Whitten said instead of having terms of service for individual products, Google was revising its terms of service to cover numerous products.



The sign-in page of social networking site Google+ is seen in Washington in August 2011. Google has found itself under increasing scrutiny from European and US regulators as it has grown from a scrappy startup into an Internet titan, branching out into various businesses including online mapping, shopping and travel and providing software for mobile phones and tablet computers.

Google account users will have to accept the new terms of service to continue using their accounts.

The main change announced Tuesday involves users who have Google accounts.

"If you're signed in, we may combine information you've provided from one service with information from other services," Whitten said.

"In short, we'll treat you as a single user across all our products, which will mean a simpler, more intuitive Google experience," Whitten said.

By linking services and sharing information "we can make search better -- figuring out what you really mean when you type in Apple, Jaguar or Pink," she said. "We can provide more relevant ads too.

"We can provide reminders that you're going to be late for a meeting based on your location, your calendar and an understanding of what the traffic is like that day," she said.

Merging the information about its users appears to be a bid by Google to glean a more integrated view of its users, an advantage enjoyed by Apple and Facebook.

"Companies everywhere want to break down product walls to get a 360 degree view of customers," said Larry Dignan of technology site ZDNet.

"Unified [user experience](#) aside, it was kind of nice to have my YouTube personas different from say, Gmail and Google+" Dignan said.

"Google will know more about you than your wife does," he said.

"Everything across your screens will be integrated and tracked.

Dignan said the move appears to be partly aimed at "juicing Google+" the Facebook rival launched by Google last year.

In March of last year, the US Federal Trade Commission reached a settlement with Google over Google Buzz, the social networking tool which was launched in February 2010 that spawned a slew of privacy complaints.

Under the settlement announced by the US regulator, Google is required to implement a comprehensive privacy program and will be subject to independent privacy audits every two years for the next 20 years.

The FTC also an ongoing probe into Google's lucrative search and [advertising](#) business. Google has said it is cooperating with the FTC investigation.

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