

Google lets users monitor their online activity

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Google on Wednesday began letting people get monthly reports summarizing what they have been up to at the Internet titan's free online services.

A freshly-added feature keeps people posted on patterns at Gmail, [YouTube](#), online search and other [Google](#) venues visited while signed into their [user accounts](#) with the California-based company.

"Sometimes it's helpful to step back and take stock of what you're doing online," Google product manager Andreas Tuerk said in a blog post announcing the "Account Activity" feature.

"Knowing more about your own account activity also can help you take steps to protect your Google Account."

He gave an example of a report potentially revealing that someone's account was signed into from countries they have not visited or from gadgets they don't own.

Google will incorporate more of its services into Account Activity reports in coming months, according to Tuerk.

Those who sign up will get password-protected links to reports and tools to manage account privacy.

The new feature was introduced the same month that Google rolled out a new privacy policy allowing the firm to track users across various services to develop targeted advertising, despite criticism from consumer advocacy groups.

Google contends the move simplifies and unifies its policies across its various services such as Gmail, YouTube, Android [mobile systems](#), Google+ social network and Internet search.

But critics including European privacy agencies and US consumer watchdogs argued the new policy, which offers no ability to opt out aside from refraining from signing into Google services, gives the Internet giant unprecedented ability to monitor its users. And some say it violates EU [privacy protections](#).

Google said the changes are designed to improve the user experience across the various products, and give the firm a more integrated view of its users, an advantage enjoyed by Apple and [Facebook](#).

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