# Make sure your smartphone apps aren't spying on you

January 12 2018, by Jim Rossman, The Dallas Morning News



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There have been some rumblings recently about smartphone apps using your phone's microphone to collect data on your TV- and movie-watching choices.

The New York Times wrote about software from a company called Alphonso that collects data to sell to advertisers.

The apps in question are mostly games. They seem harmless, but if you grant permission for those apps to use your phone's [microphone](#), they can listen to your life through the phone—even when the app isn't being used.

The Alphonso software can hear audio tones embedded in our video content to identify what we are watching.

According to the article, Alphonso's spokesman says they don't record speech, but I'm guessing most of us do not want our privacy invaded by games like Real Bowling Strike 10 Pin.

So what can you do to protect yourself?

Pay attention to what happens when you install a new app.

When you install apps from the Google Play store and iTunes App store, they will ask you if you'd like to grant permission for the app to use your phone's microphone.

iOS apps will ask you during installation, while Android apps should ask the first time they launch.

CHECK YOUR SETTINGS

You'll want to make sure you know which apps are using your microphone.

On iOS devices, you'll open Settings, then open Privacy and then open Microphone.

You'll see a list of apps that you've given permission to use the microphone.

On Android 6 and newer, you'll open Settings, then Apps.

You'll see a list of apps, but you'll have to open each one and look for that app's Permissions line to see what permissions you've given it.

You can also get to each app's permissions by pressing and holding on the app's icon and then choosing App Info from the pop-up menu.

I'll admit I was a bit surprised at the list on my iPhone. I have six apps on my phone that use the microphone. The only app that surprised me was Instagram. I forgot I gave Instagram permission to use the microphone when it added the ability to record video clips with audio.

If you see an app using your microphone, and you are not sure why, touch the slider to turn off the app's microphone access. If you decide to turn it on again, you can do so by going back to the same spot.

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