



A Digital Diet for Carbon Footprint Reduction



Go Green Highland Park and the Highland Park Public Library
January 22, 2025

Welcome!

Our goal tonight:

To understand how our actions in the digital world relate to our carbon footprint and consider possible simple ways to shrink it and manage it in the future.

To begin, let's consider our digital impact as individuals...

Disclosure: Information sources are footnoted, though please note that data usage statistics change daily and as such may be understated/recently outdated.

The average internet user, who are we?

There are 5+ Billion internet users worldwide.* The average individual internet user:

- Has 7 social media accounts.**
- Has over 90 online accounts. **(Think of every password you have.)
- Approximately 500 million tweets are sent each day, and over 300 million photos are uploaded to Facebook daily. **
- All online interactions translate into data.



What do we mean by individual data?

1. **Stored** in our devices
2. **Stored/backed up** in the Cloud (data centers, not just for AI!)
3. **Active** – Internet actions such as streaming a movie - 2GB per 2-hour movie*



How does our data translate to carbon emissions?

100 Gigabytes **stored** in the Cloud = 0.2 tons of carbon emissions per year**

Data in the cloud causes more carbon emissions than on a hard drive.***



There are multiple benefits to this process:

- Save carbon emissions helps to slow down climate change
- Save \$
 - Lower storage fees
 - Prolonged equipment life due to reduced battery drain
- Reduce risk to data security/identity theft for you and your contacts

How to begin:

Assess and focus on what's quick and easy = sustainable.

- I. The initial push/diet - targets for dropping excess data:
 1. Smart phone and/or computer
 2. Cloud/internet back up(s)
 3. Social media, email and other online accounts

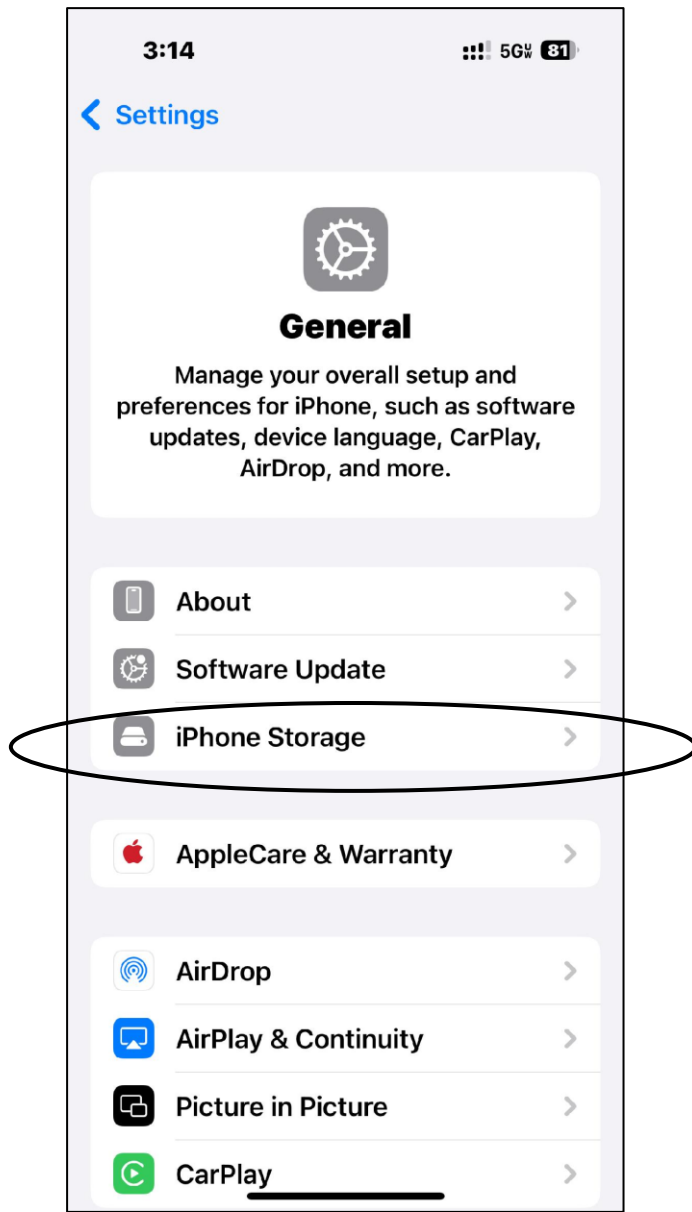
- II. Maintenance mode/ Lifestyle changes:
 1. Daily habits ongoing
 2. Periodic self-check

Smart phone/computer storage*

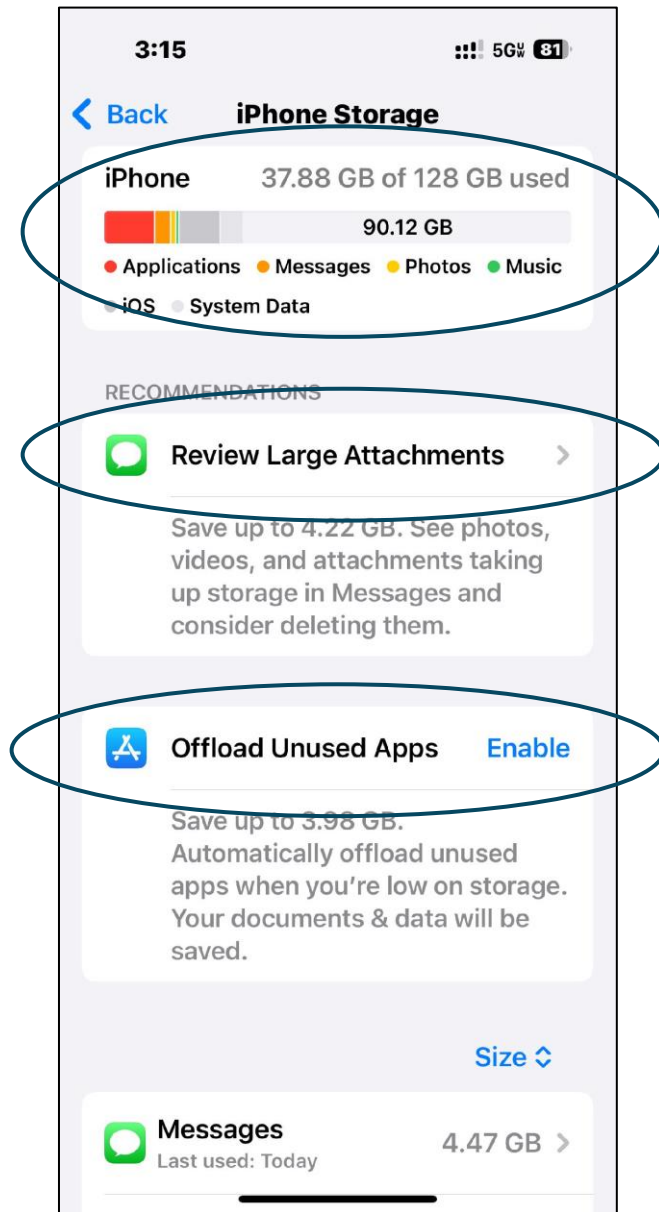
Your device knows what's out there!

- Settings > General > iPhone storage
- Displays areas of high data usage that may be reduced.
- Note: Everyone's decisions will be different.

**Note that the sample is an iPhone but similar storage review features are available on android phones as well as laptops supported by Microsoft, Apple, etc.*

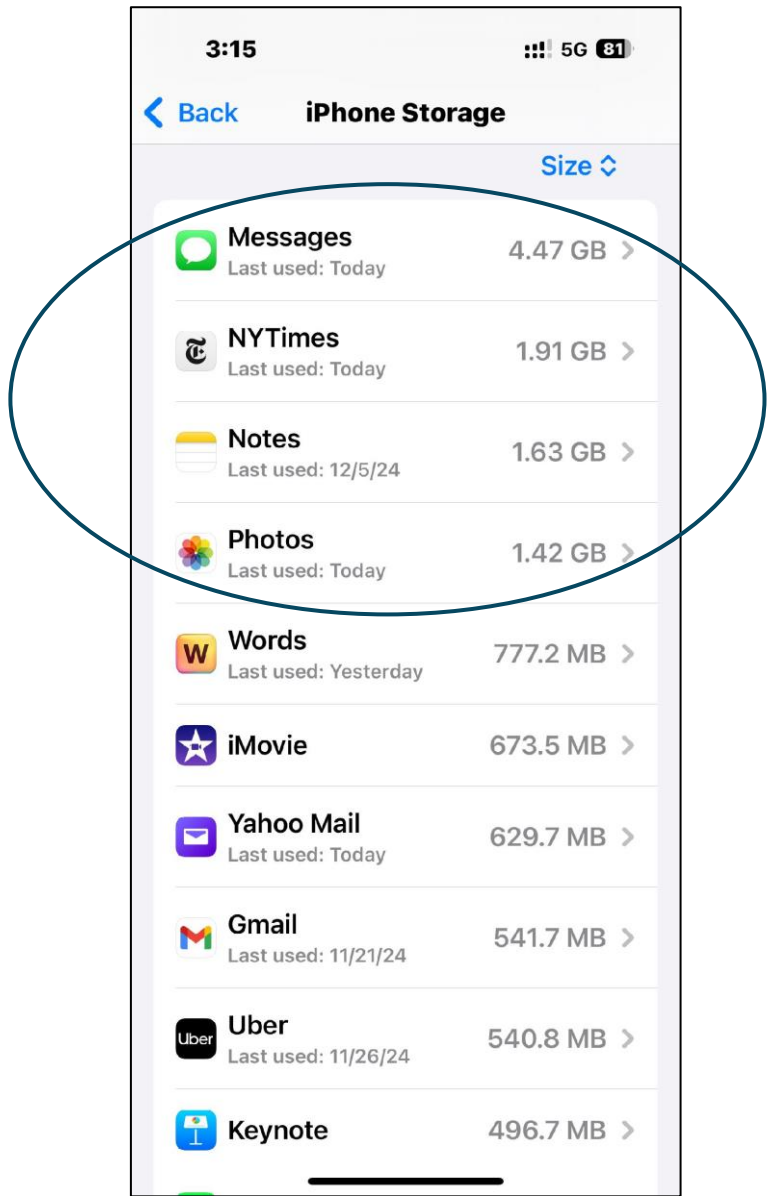


Smart Phone Storage (in Settings) – sample iPhone

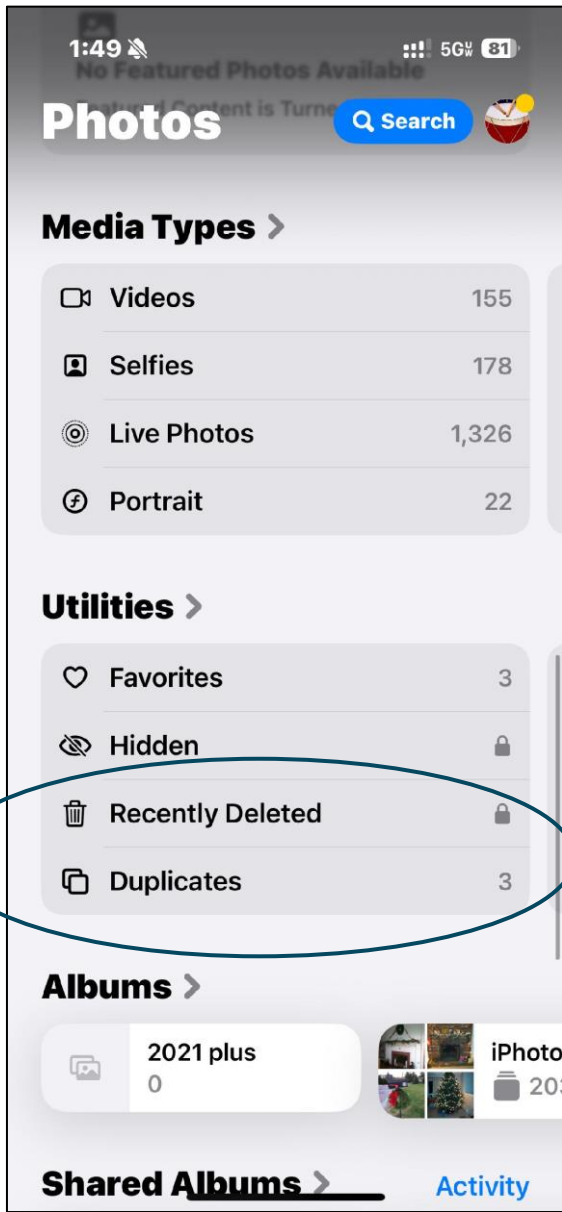


Smart Phone storage (in Settings)

- Review large attachments (can review them without changing screens)
- Offload unused apps
- Apps listed in order of size (then go to that app to review it)

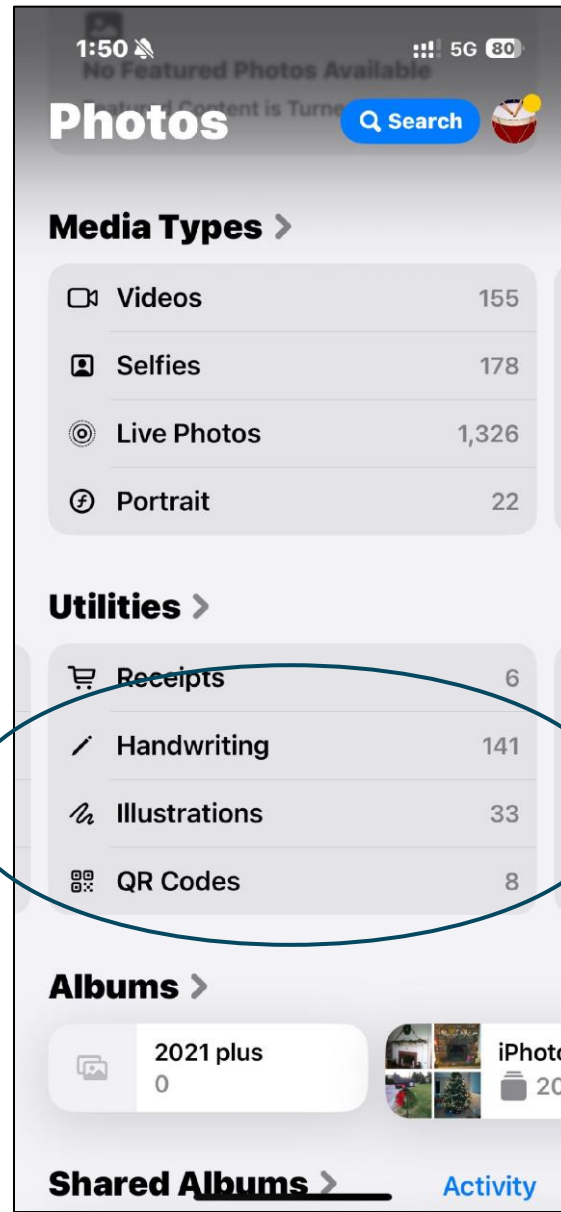


Smart Phone storage (in Settings) – sample iPhone



Swipe left for more Media types

Swipe left for more utilities



Phone app (home screen) – iPhone

5 more easy ways to save data:

1

Consider setting auto-delete at 1 year for all texts (settings>general>apps>messages>message history).

2

Turn off apps permission to tracking your data and your location—be selective (settings>privacy & security>location services and tracking).

3

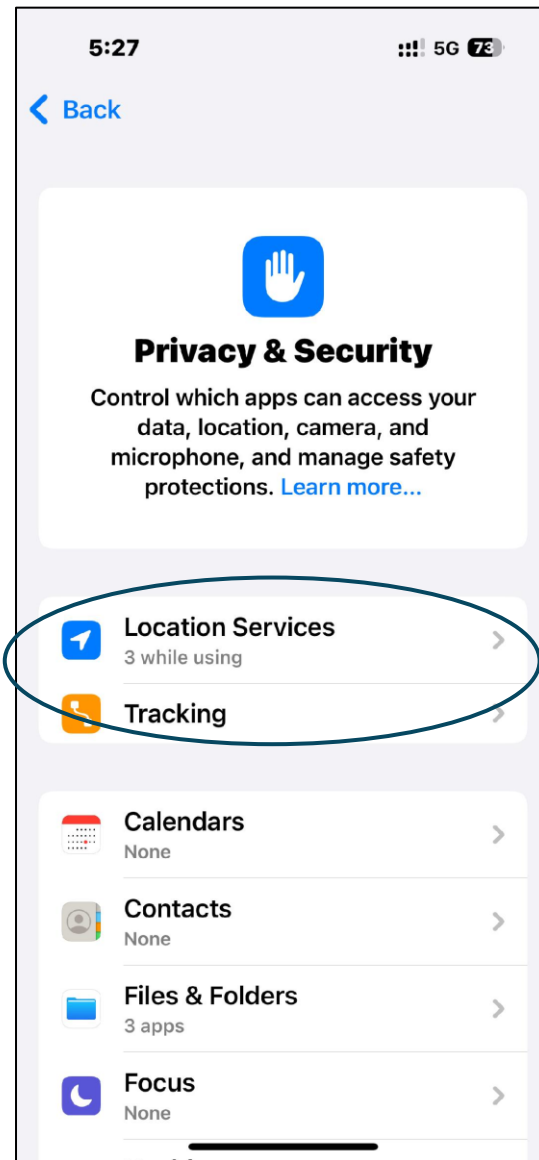
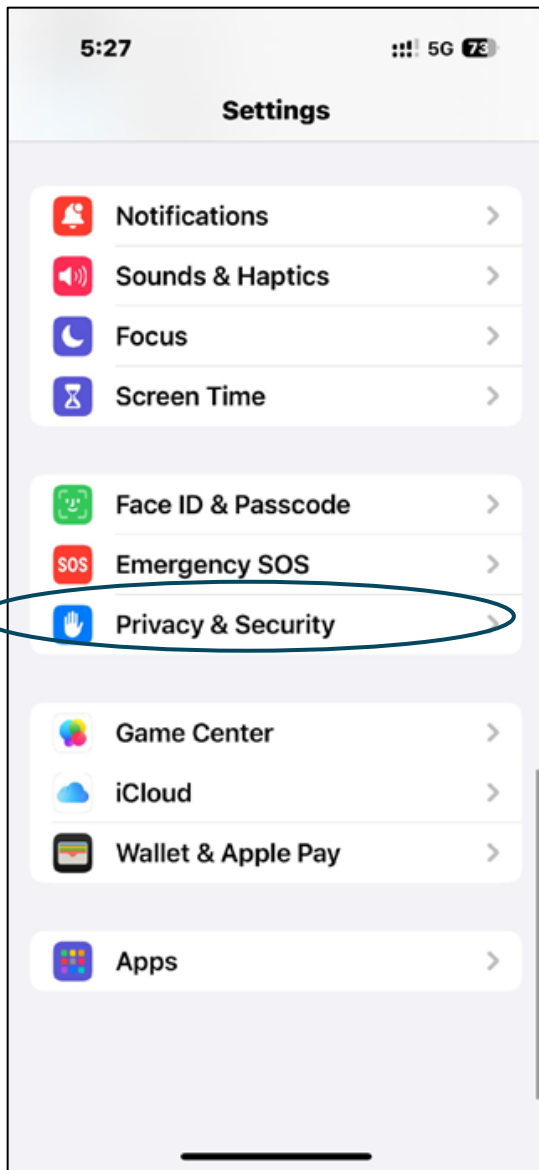
Background App refresh – Consider turning this off. Each app automatically refreshes when it's opened (settings>general>background app refresh).

4

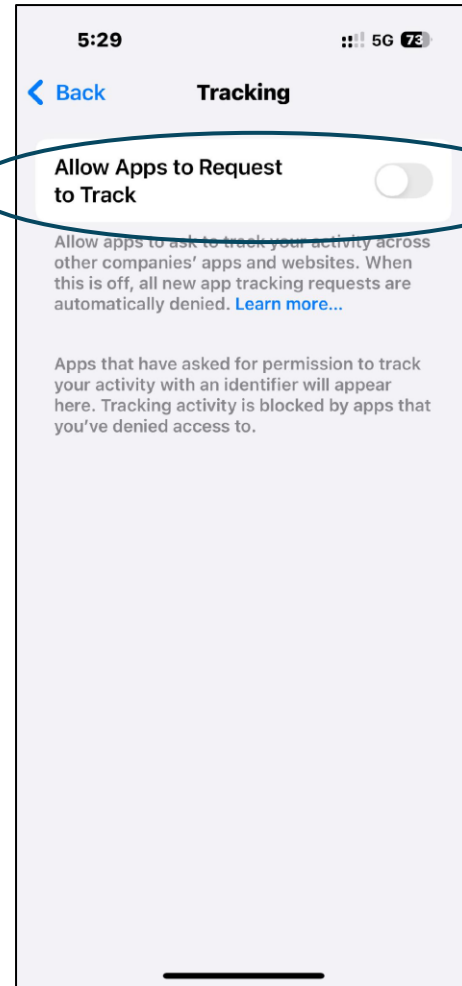
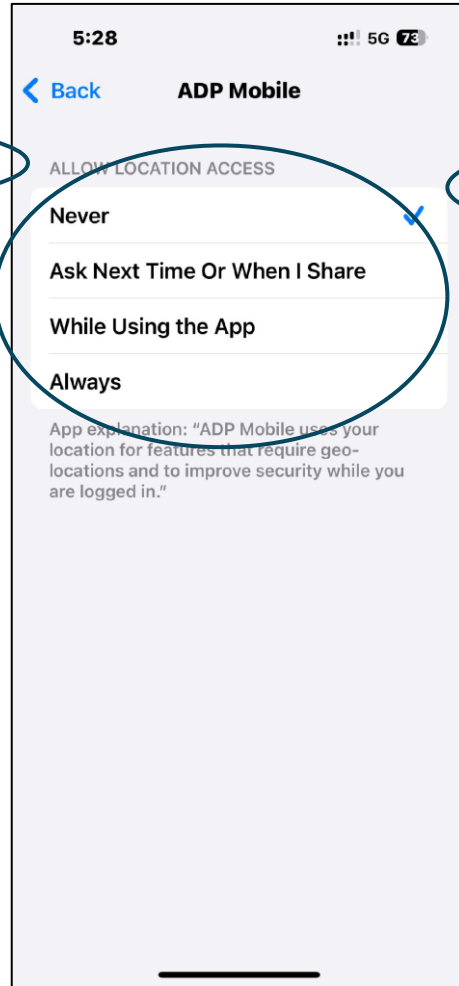
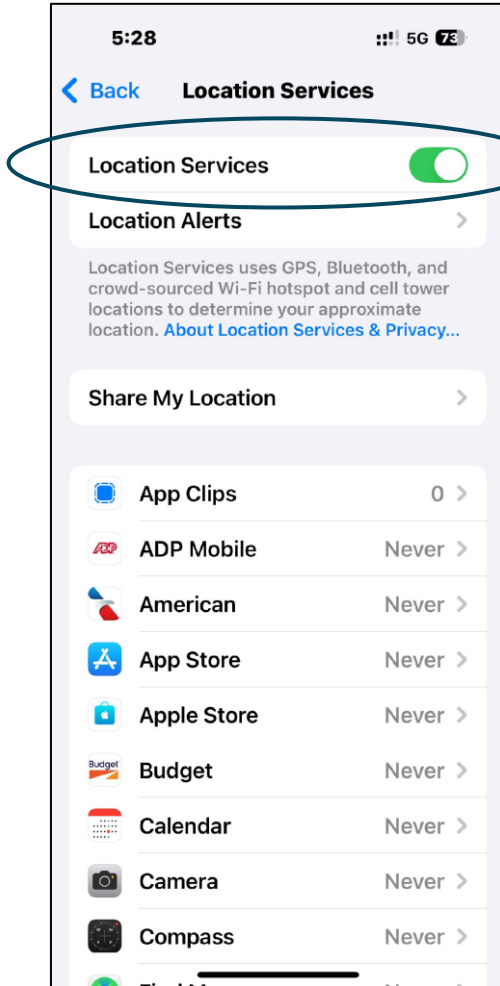
If you don't need your email immediately, consider changing how often your email updates (settings>mail>fetch new data, then choose push (constant updates) or fetch (and set the frequency)).

5

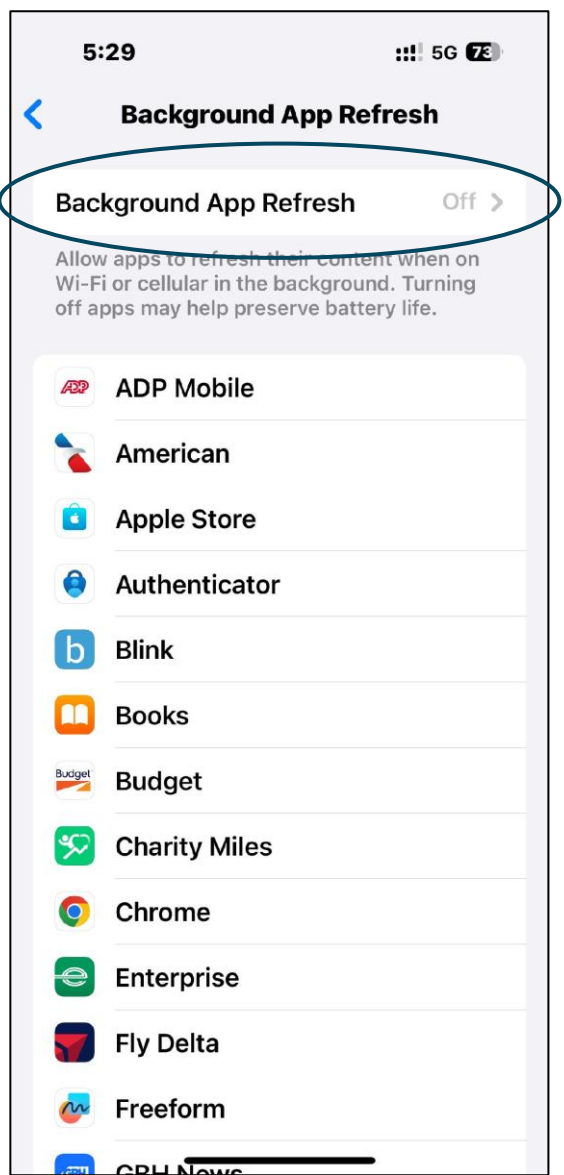
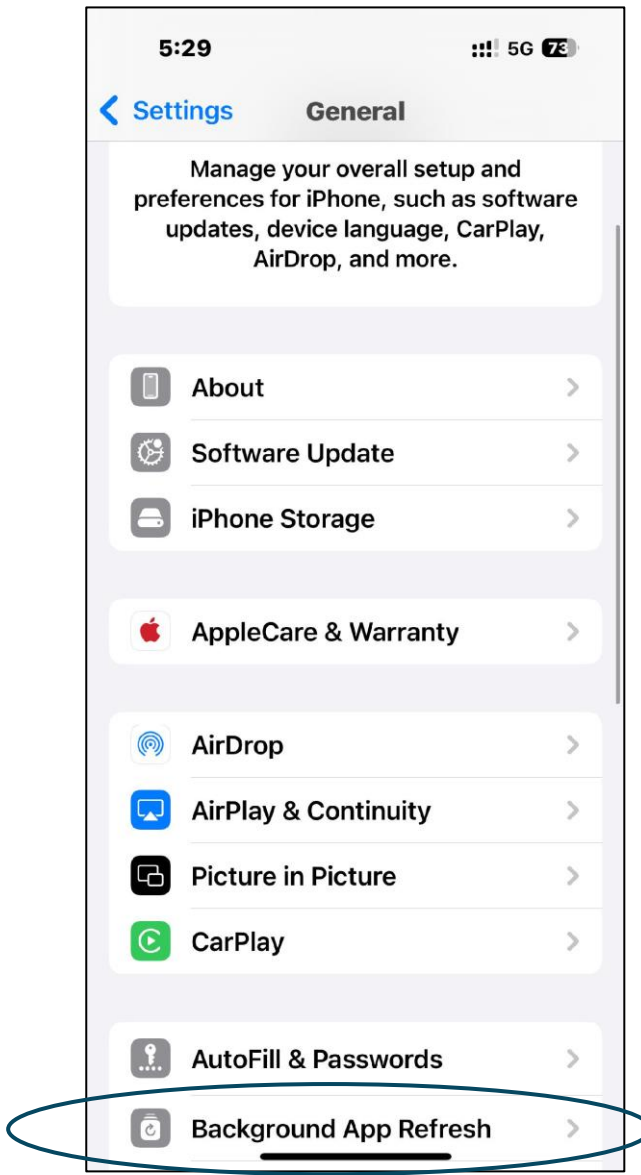
Shut off unnecessary notifications (settings>notifications and choose which apps you want and what types of notifications).



2. Consider turning off apps' permission to tracking your data and your location where practical.



....Apps' tracking permission settings continued....



3. Background App refresh – Consider turning this off. Each app automatically refreshes when it's opened.

Internet back up/Cloud Storage

1. Remember this is the duplicate data. Check what is actually being backed up. Make changes if it's not what you thought.
2. The challenge of digital world is that we don't see the volume.
3. **Imagine your photos and documents were physically taking up space in your home. Which ones would you keep?**

Social Media and Other Online Accounts

Consider what you no longer use and perhaps...

1. Close it – if benign (a shopping website, a streaming app etc.)
2. Empty it and block access (see account privacy settings) – if consequential
3. Streaming services – if not using, freeze it (example, Netflix, YouTube TV) to save money and keep your account locked/protected).



Email – The quasi social media

Easiest/quickest items first:

1

Regularly empty the trash folder. Until you do it's still using data

2

Check/empty the spam folder. Try to do this daily to readily spot ones that aren't spam.

3

Check/clean your sent items. Can delete year by year.

4

Clean out your inbox, organizing "keepers" in subfolders.

5

Periodically clean out old contacts – if you get hacked, they get exposed too.

6

Unsubscribe legitimate unwanted email (when in doubt send it to spam).

II. Maintenance mode:

Daily habits

- Smart Phone:
 - Apps left open use data – check for open apps daily and close them
 - Delete the day’s “litter”
 - Delete your deletes! – photos, texts, notes, voice mails
- Email:
 - Clean out new inbox emails
 - Check and empty spam folder daily
 - Empty trash folder daily

Periodic housekeeping -

2-3 months (the more often you do it, the easier it is)

- Do the Settings>Storage checkup for large data creep
- Cleanout Email

Remember precycling? Translate it to your digital world.

*Every online interaction
creates data, most of
which gets stored.*

Consider:

1. When adding an app, what data will you give them access to?
2. When a website uses cookies, why allow more than those required for functionality? Consider not permitting tracking or cookies, if not essential.
3. Is it worth giving your data to get a website's discount if you don't plan to be a regular customer? Once they have it, they have it.
4. When signing up for an app service (example, a news app), do you really want email reminders? Once started they are difficult to stop.
5. Assess your hours per week streaming content (movies, shows, etc.).

Resources are out there:

Your library – Consult your tech resource person

Online tutorials – Google, Apple, Youtube, etc.

Apple - free in-person classes at <https://www.Apple.com/today/>



Questions and ideas!

Thank you!