AI and Privacy: What ChatGPT Knows About You

A practical guide to the information you share, the controls you can use, and the limits of those controls.

The short answer

ChatGPT can receive what you type, upload, or connect, plus certain account and service-use information. Your choices can affect chat history, personalisation, and model improvement, but no single toggle means that all data disappears. What is available depends on your account, location, product, and workplace settings.

A useful way to think about it

ChatGPT is a service, not a private notebook. A prompt can include personal information even when you do not mean it to. Think before sharing details about yourself or anyone else, check which account you are using, and choose the right settings for the task. This guide describes product controls, not a guarantee that sensitive information is risk-free or legal advice.

Checked against OpenAI Help Centre and privacy information, and UK Information Commissioner's Office guidance. Product settings can change; check the current controls shown in your account.

01 / WHAT MAY BE COLLECTED

What can ChatGPT know?

The details vary with the features you use. Information may come directly from you, from your device and use of the service, or from connected services you choose to link.

What you provide

Prompts, replies, feedback, and other content you submit. Depending on the feature, this can include files, images, audio, video, or information retrieved from connected services.

Account details can include your name, contact details, credentials, date of birth, payment information, and transaction history. You may also provide information through support messages, surveys, or events.

Service and device data

Service records may include IP address, browser and device information, dates and times, feature use, interactions, and general location inferred from an IP address. Cookies and similar technologies can support sign-in, preferences, and service operation. More precise location or contact information may be involved if you choose to provide it or connect contacts. What is collected depends on your device permissions, account, and features used.

What this means

A pasted email, a screenshot, a voice recording, or a document can contain personal information about you and other people. Treat uploads as information you have chosen to share, not as anonymous material.

Privacy is about purpose, not just collection

The UK GDPR principles offer a useful lens: use personal data lawfully, fairly, and transparently; collect it for clear purposes; limit it to what is needed; keep it accurate; do not keep it longer than necessary; protect it; and be able to show accountability. These principles guide organisations handling personal data. They are not a claim that every user action in ChatGPT is automatically compliant.

02 / HISTORY, MEMORY, AND TRAINING

Three controls that do different jobs

Chat history

Regular chats can remain in your history until you delete them or a workspace retention policy applies. Archiving hides a chat from the usual list; it does not delete it.

Model improvement

For eligible personal accounts, turning off Improve the model for everyone means new conversations are not used to train OpenAI models. Existing chats can still remain in history.

Memory and personalisation

Memory helps personalise responses. It is separate from model training. Review memory controls separately if you want to manage what may inform future chats.

Temporary Chat: private from history, not a magic eraser

While it remains temporary, a chat does not appear in chat history, does not create or update memories, and is not used to improve OpenAI models. OpenAI says a copy may be retained for up to 30 days for safety purposes. Before starting, check whether the temporary chat is personalised: that choice may allow existing memories, custom instructions, or plugins to inform the reply. Saving a temporary chat converts it into a regular chat, which then follows the applicable account and workspace settings.

One important edge case

If you send feedback on a response, such as a thumbs-up or thumbs-down, the conversation associated with that feedback may be used to improve models. A connected GPT action or third-party service may also have its own privacy terms and retention practices.

03 / TAKE PRACTICAL CONTROL

Choose carefully, then review

Delete or archive?

Archive removes a chat from the regular sidebar but keeps it in your account. Delete removes it from your view immediately and OpenAI says it is scheduled for permanent deletion within 30 days, with exceptions for data already de-identified or that must be kept for legal or security reasons. Deleted chats cannot be restored. Files saved separately in Library may need separate deletion.

Export a copy

Eligible signed-in personal accounts can request an export in Data controls or through the Privacy Portal. It may take up to seven days; the download link expires after 24 hours. Keep the resulting file secure. Self-service export is not available for Business, Enterprise, or Healthcare workspaces; ask the workspace owner about managed data.

Using a work account

Managed workspace data is governed by your organisation's agreement and policies. Administrators may be able to access, export, audit, retain, or delete account data, depending on configuration and applicable law. OpenAI says Business, Enterprise, Edu, and Healthcare workspace content is not used to train models by default, but organisations can have specific settings or agreements. Use a personal account for personal activity and check which workspace is active.

A simple privacy checklist

- Remove names, addresses, account numbers, passwords, and confidential client details before prompting.
- Share only the minimum text or file needed.
- Check Data controls and Memory separately, then review connected apps and GPT actions.
- Use Temporary Chat when appropriate, but remember its safety retention and personalisation caveats.
- Delete chats you no longer need; archive only when you want to keep them out of the sidebar.
- Follow workplace rules and never paste restricted material into an unapproved account.

Sources and further reading

OpenAI Help Centre: Data controls in ChatGPT
OpenAI Help Centre: Temporary Chat in ChatGPT
OpenAI Help Centre: Deleting and archiving chats in ChatGPT
OpenAI Help Centre: Exporting your ChatGPT history and data
OpenAI Europe Privacy Policy
UK Information Commissioner's Office: Data protection principles

Information checked on 20 October 2026. Product features, names, retention details, and available settings may change or vary by plan, region, account, and workspace. Check the latest official information before relying on a setting. This guide is educational and is not legal advice.