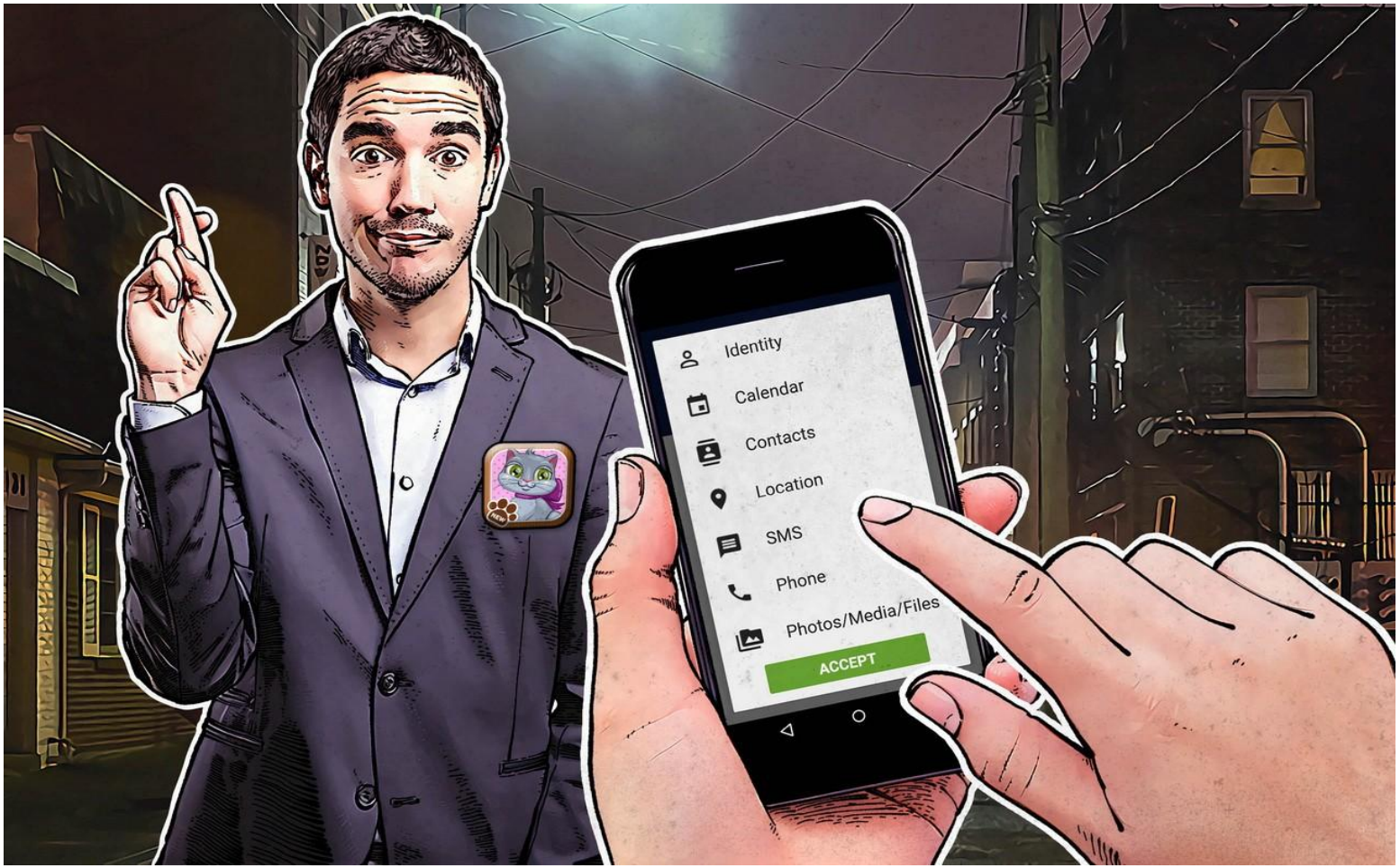
TEACHERS COLLEGE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

All About Apps



We'll cover...

- What's an app?
- What are app permissions?
- What do companies gain by getting your permission?
- Typical permissions requested by apps
- How to check up on apps already on your phone
- App safety tips

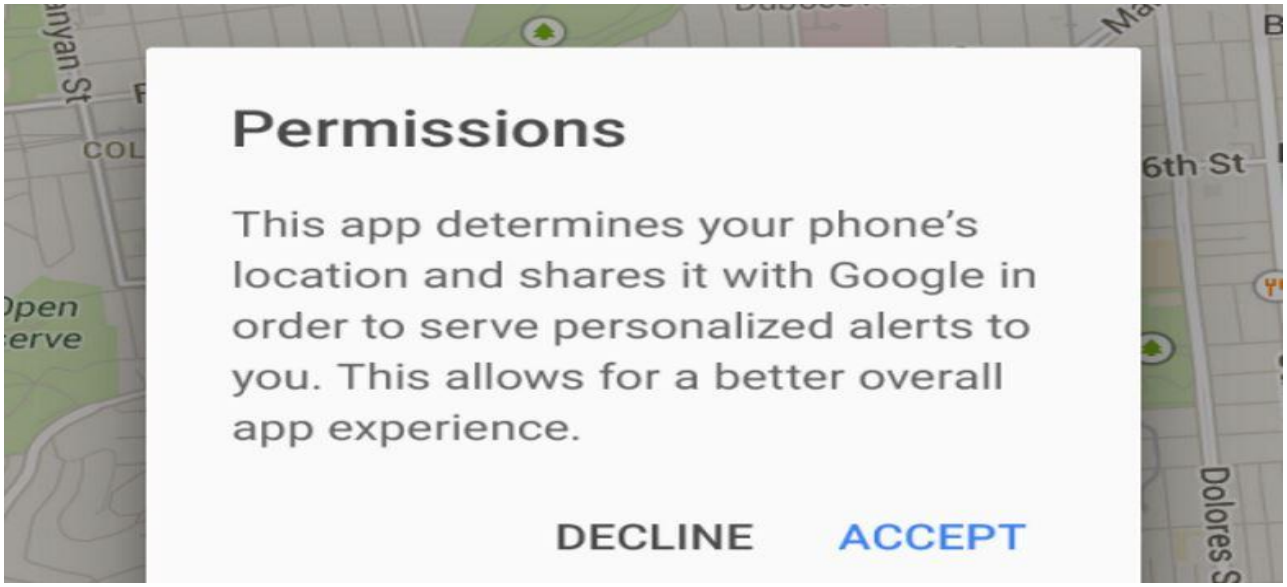
What's an "app?"

- A mobile application, also referred to as a mobile app or simply an app, is a software application designed to run on a mobile device such as a phone, tablet, or watch.

- Every program on your phone is an app!

What are app permissions?

- The purpose of a *permission* is to protect the privacy of a user.
- Apps must request permission to access sensitive user data (such as contacts and text messages), as well as certain system features (such as camera and internet).
- Depending on the feature, the system might grant the permission automatically or might prompt the user to approve the request.



Why do apps need to access data on our devices?

- **Functionality** – e.g. access to the camera is required by Snapchat; Google Maps requires location data
- **Security** – e.g. personal data is required to confirm the user's identity
- **Data mining** – information on the app's users is mined in order to facilitate ongoing product optimisation, or for marketing purposes (not always a good thing…)

****Permissions by themselves are harmless and in THEORY provide users a good mobile experience...**

When does access cross the line?

- Some apps ask for a host of permissions to access data and functions they don't require
- The key lies in identifying the purpose of the app and questioning what seem to be unnecessary requests
- If an app is free, it's important to ask how the developers are making their money (Ads? Premium service upgrade?)
- If it's difficult to figure how an app you use is making money, it is highly likely that <u>you as a user are its source of monetization</u>

Typical permissions requested by apps

Modify, delete and read storage: Gives an app permission to access the storage on your device in order to save and edit files.

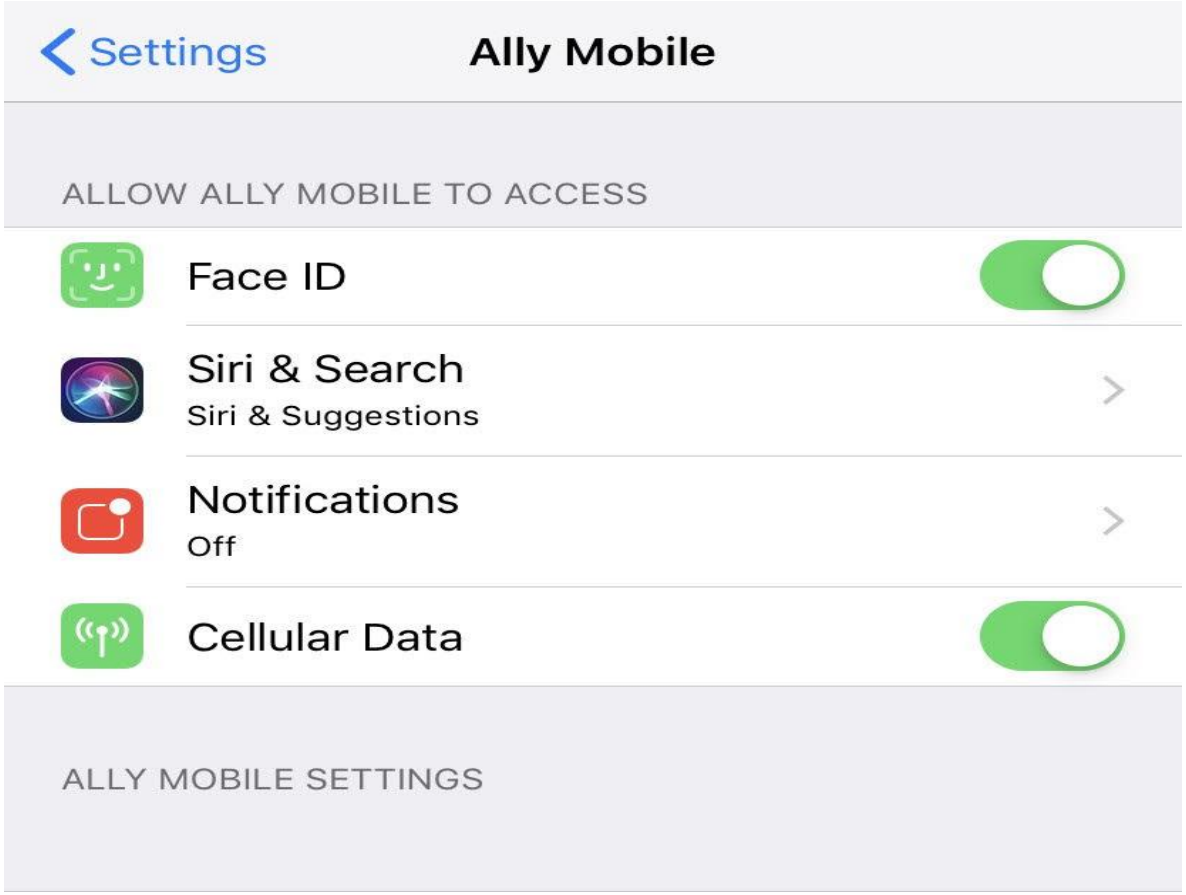
Full network access: Most apps require some kind of Internet access, whether it's for software updates, syncing or retrieving data from online resources.

Read and send text messages: This permission can also be used to automatically scan your incoming texts for authorization codes. Make sure that if an app is asking for this, it has a clear use for it.

Read your contacts: The ability to share content with your friends in some way is often the underlying purpose.

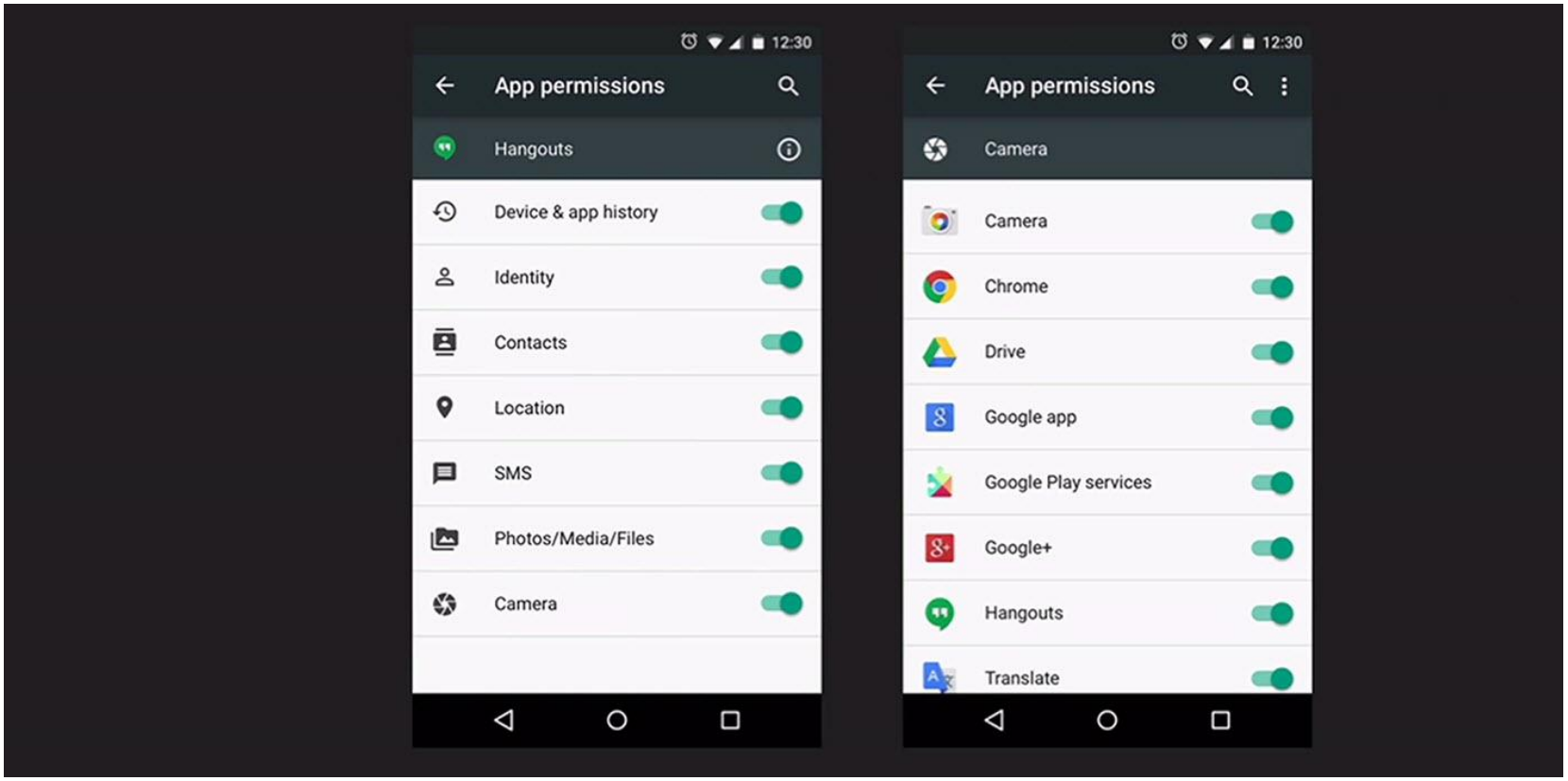
How to check apps already on your phone: iOS

iPhone/iPad: Go to Settings, scroll down to your apps, then click on an app to review allowed access.



How to check apps already on your phone: Android

Android smartphones and tablets: Go to **Settings-->Apps**, then tap the app you want to check. Then, scroll down the app's information screen towards the **Permissions** section and read about the permission groups the app has.



Follow these tips to stay safe:

- Research the app and its developer — A web search can reveal important info

- Read the reviews — Users' comments can provide valuable insights add even more security.

- Understand permissions and access rights —Understand the risks before you grant access to device data, features, and functionality

- Avoid risky apps —Do not download childish apps, risqué apps, and those that deliver illegal or pirated content

Coming up next…

Mobile Device Makeover

Thursday, October 3

10-10:30am

2-2:30pm