

A (Mostly) Google-Free Android

Amolith

2020-05-18T15:28:02-04:00

Contents

My motivation	1
What I'm using	1
What it's like	2

Let me put a little disclaimer right here at the beginning: I don't use my mobile phone how a lot of people do so your mileage will vary. I also say "Mostly" in the title because it's incredibly difficult to *completely* remove Google from Android though [some projects](#) have done a very good job of it.

My motivation

In short, I value my privacy and Google is about as far from privacy-friendly as you can get. What information algorithms are capable of extrapolating given enough data is downright *scary* and **that is Google's entire business model**. In addition, the company itself is [really quite terrible](#), from [launching a censored search engine in China](#) and [selling AI tech to the US military](#) to [mishandling sexual assault cases](#) and [forcing people onto Google services with sheer market dominance](#).

I do not like Google and I do not want it on my phone.

What I'm using

I have the [Redmi Note 5 Pro](#) and love it. Specifically, one of the things I like is Xiaomi's business model. It's exactly the same as Google's—data collection and advertising—but it's incredibly easy to circumvent. Xiaomi not only uses its [MIUI](#) (*me-you-eye*) for user tracking and profiling but it also displays ads on the lock screen and elsewhere. Because of all that, they're able to *seriously* drop the price on their phones and almost sell them at no more than the hardware and manufacturing cost.

Circumventing the data collection is as easy as flashing your own ROM; I prefer [AospExtended](#) though [LineageOS](#) is a much simpler and "cleaner" Android ex-

perience. Many of the installation guide will tell you to flash some [Open GApps](#) package but I don't. Others will say to use [microG](#), which is much better but I decided to even omit that the last time I flashed my phone. Thus, I have absolutely no compatibility with Google Services and apps that break without it, well, break.

I also have the [Mi Band 4](#) which does give Xiaomi the ability to collect a plethora of biometric data as well ... if I use their app. Instead, I like [Gadgetbridge](#) from [F-Droid](#). I do occasionally want proprietary apps such as [Linguee](#) for English/German translation and I get those through [Aurora](#) rather than Google Play.

What it's like

I mentioned that some apps will break without Google Services, however, I find that they are solidly in the minority; most proprietary applications will work perfectly fine without Google Services or microG though you won't get push notifications. That's really not a big deal for me because I've been moving to a more minimal mobile experience and do most things on my desktop anyway. This is closely related to the disclaimer at the top. I rarely use my phone for anything other than communication through open source apps and listening to podcasts; I don't even have an email client installed (but if I did, it would be [K-9 Mail](#).) In all, it's perfectly useable but don't expect your banking application to work.¹

This was posted as part of [#100DaysToOffload](#), an [awesome idea](#) from [Kev Quirk](#). If you want to participate, just write something every day for 100 days and post a link on social media with the hashtag!

¹Why would you bank on mobile anyway? Mobile platforms are some of the most insecure and something that sensitive should be kept far away.