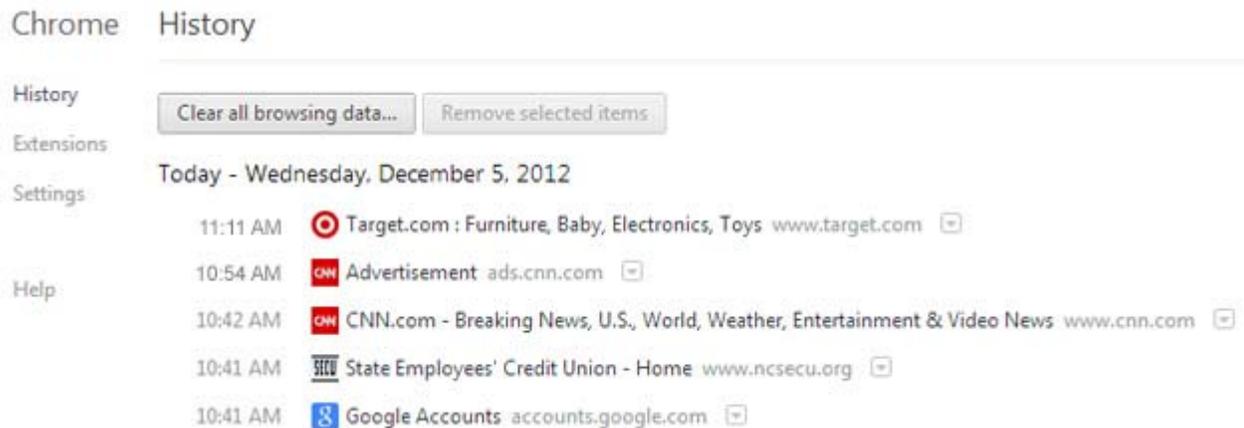# Browsing Privately

Chances are, you're already pretty familiar with your favorite internet browser. You might use it to make purchases online, fill out forms, or even research personal interests. However, while you're surfing the web, you may not realize that it's possible your online activity is being seen by others. This is because your browser automatically saves a record of your browsing history, and many websites have the ability to track what you click on.

Browsing history in Google Chrome

In this lesson, we'll talk about two options that you can enable to increase privacy while browsing: private browsing and Do Not Track.

Private Browsing

You may be wondering why you would need to browse in private. You could choose this option when you're shopping for a gift, researching a sensitive subject (like a personal medical topic), or using a public computer (like at a library). Basically, it makes sense to enable private browsing anytime you want to keep your browsing history confidential.

Understanding Private Browsing

Private browsing only prevents your internet browser from saving your browsing history. This means that anyone else who uses your computer will not be able to see your online activity. Unfortunately, it doesn't guarantee security—your activity can still be tracked by websites. We'll talk more about tracking later in this lesson.

Turning on Private Browsing

Private browsing is available for most internet browsers. Here, we'll show you how to enable private browsing in Internet Explorer, Chrome, Firefox, and Safari (Mac computers).

Internet Explorer: Click the Gear icon ⚙. Hover the mouse over Safety and select InPrivate Browsing from the menu that appears.
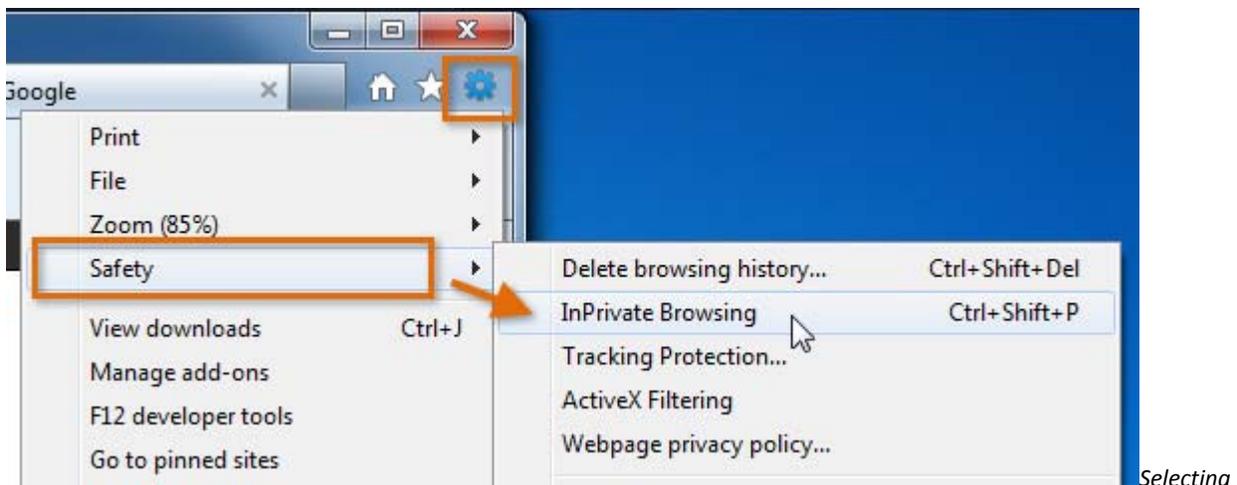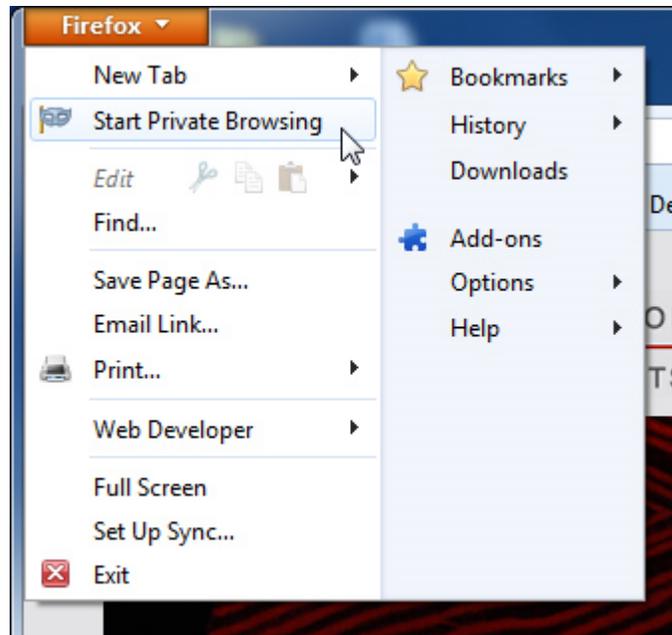

Selecting InPrivate Browsing in Internet Explorer

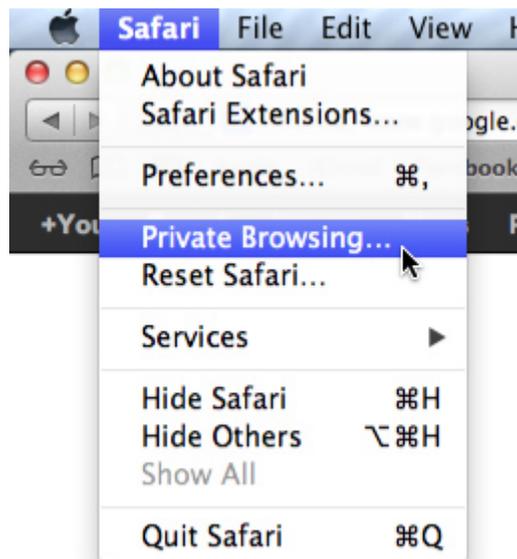Chrome: Click the Menu button and select New incognito window.
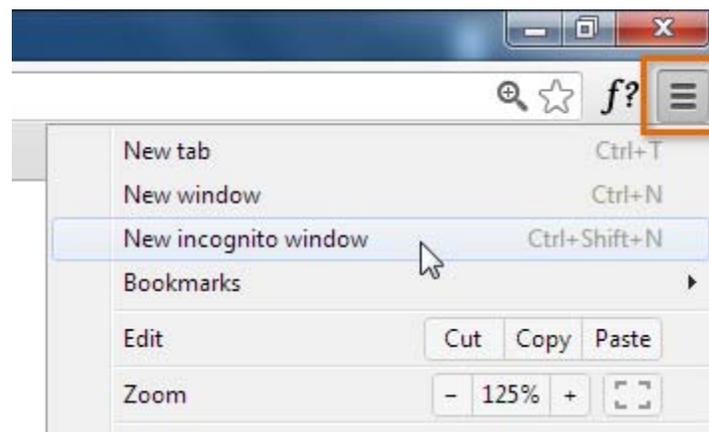
Selecting New incognito window in Chrome

Firefox: Click the Firefox button and select Start Private Browsing.

Clicking Start Private Browsing in Firefox

Safari: Click the Safari menu and select Private Browsing.

Selecting Private Browsing in Safari

Do Not Track

In case you were not aware, websites do have the ability to track what you click on. This is usually to deliver targeted ads to you, but can also be used for collecting data and making a site run smoother. Currently, browsers let you choose not to participate in this system by offering a Do Not Track option.

Understanding Do Not Track

Do Not Track asks each website that you visit to not track your activities. It is similar to the national "Do Not Call" list. However, website participation in Do Not Track is voluntary, so some of the websites you visit may not honor the request. To learn more about how your browsing activity is tracked, visit our Internet Safety lesson [Staying Safe While Browsing](#).

Turning on Do Not Track

Internet browsers generally place the Do Not Track option in the Privacy settings. By default, most browsers have this feature turned off. You will need to open your browser's privacy settings to enable it.
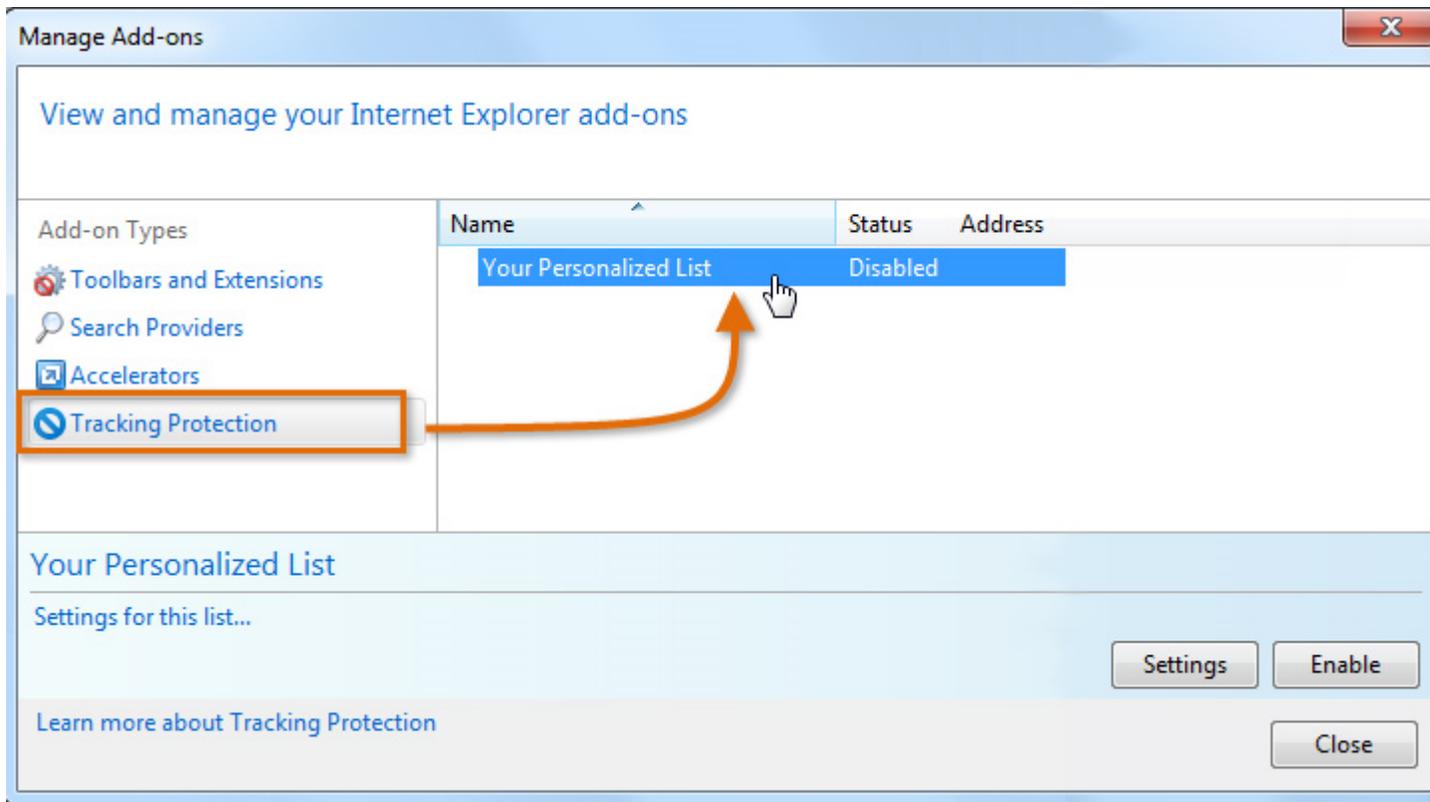
In Internet Explorer, the Do Not Track option is located in the Safety menu.

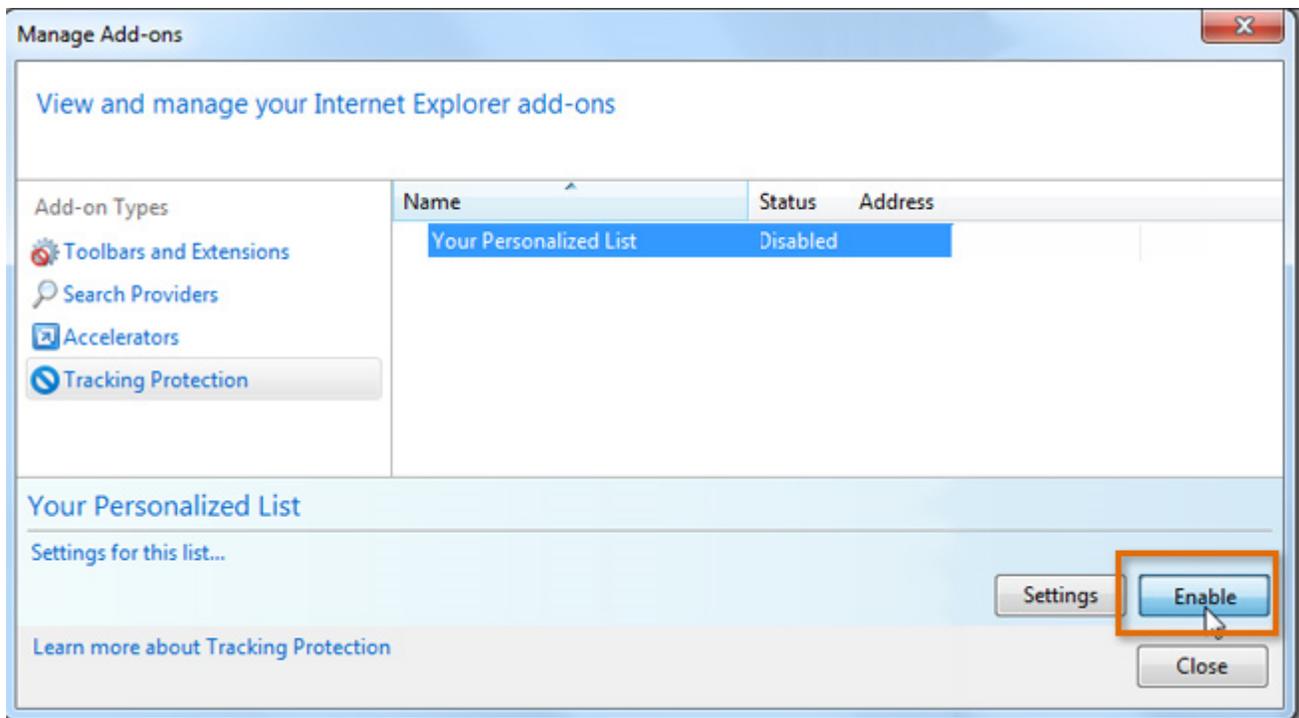Click the Gear icon ⚙. Hover the mouse over Safety and select Tracking Protection from the menu that appears.
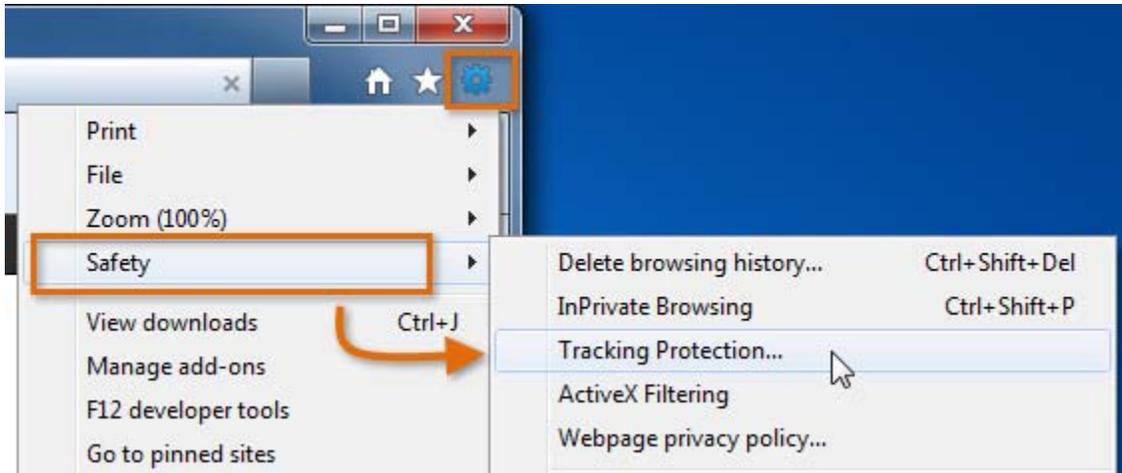
Selecting Tracking Protection

The Manage Add-ons dialog box will appear. Click Tracking Protection and then click Your Personalized List.
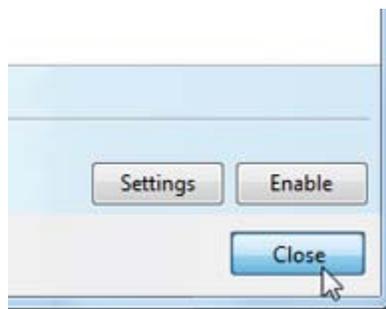

Clicking Your Personalized List

Click the Enable button.

Enabling Do Not Track

The status of Your Personalized List will change to Enabled. Do Not Track is now on.

Click Close to return to Internet Explorer.

Clicking Close

Enabling Do Not Track in Other Browsers

To view instructions for how to enable Do Not Track in Firefox; Chrome; and Safari (Mac computers), follow the links below:

Do Not Track - Firefox (Mozilla Support Center)

Do Not Track - Chrome (cnet.com)

Do Not Track - Safari (Apple Support Center)

Older versions of browsers may not support the Do Not Track option. You may need to update your browser to the most recent version.