ChatGPT now allows disabling chat history, declining training, and exporting data

OpenAI / Stable Diffusion

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On Tuesday, OpenAI announced new controls for ChatGPT users that allow them to turn off chat history, simultaneously opting out of providing that conversation history as data for training AI models. Also, users can now export chat history for local storage.

The new controls, which rolled out to all ChatGPT users today, can be found in ChatGPT settings. Conversations that begin with the chat history disabled won't be used to train and improve the ChatGPT model, nor will they appear in the history sidebar. OpenAI will retain the conversations internally for 30 days and review them "only when needed to monitor for abuse" before permanently deleting them.

However, users who wish to opt out of providing data to OpenAI for training will lose the conversation history feature. It's unclear why users cannot use conversation history while simultaneously opting out of model training.

Previously, ChatGPT kept track of conversations and used the conversation data to fine-tune its AI models. Users could

periodically clear their chat history on demand, but any conversation could still be used for fine-tuning. That posed a significant privacy issue, especially for sensitive data that might be shared by corporate employees, lawyers, or doctors using ChatGPT.

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Enlarge / A screenshot of ChatGPT settings that shows the “Chat History & Training” option.
Benj Edwards / Ars Technica

ChatGPT’s conversation history got OpenAI in hot water in March due to a bug that temporarily exposed some ChatGPT users’ chat histories to other people. That event attracted regulatory interest in Italy that has not yet been resolved. The new privacy-related ChatGPT features are likely related to the resolution process.

Also on Tuesday, OpenAI introduced a new “export” option in ChatGPT settings that allows users to export their ChatGPT data to files that can be stored locally on a PC. We tried the export option in ChatGPT Settings (click “Show” beside “Data Controls”) and received an email containing a link to a compressed HTML file and several JSON files that contained our

stored conversation history with ChatGPT. The history only extended back to the last time we cleared the conversation history.

Enlarge / A screenshot of an email from OpenAI providing a link to exported ChatGPT conversation history.
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For professionals and enterprises that “need more control over their data,” OpenAI also announced that it is working on a new “ChatGPT Business” subscription that will opt users out of model training by default, according to OpenAI’s Data Controls FAQ. OpenAI says the release date for ChatGPT Business will occur “in the coming months.”

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