Google is trying to make sure apps let you delete your account

Google is introducing a new Play Store rule that will require apps to have a “readily discoverable option” for deleting your account, both in the app itself and on the web. In a blog post on Wednesday, the company says the change is meant to give users “greater clarity and control over their in-app data.”

The rule will apply to apps that let you create an account, and Google is trying to make sure that users won’t have to redownload an app because they deleted it before requesting that their account also be deleted. The company plans to add a field to the Google Play Store that will link users to the web address for account deletion.

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There are a few caveats to the policy that developers should take note of. It explicitly says that letting a user temporarily deactivate or freeze their account won’t be enough to meet the requirement, which also specifies that developers have to delete users’ data along with their account unless they have “legitimate reasons” to keep it. (That includes legal or security requirements, though developers will have to disclose how they retain users’ data.)

Given that this is a relatively big change that could require some developers to put in some work, it won’t be going into effect immediately. The company says that the “first step”

will require developers to add more information about their data deletion practices by December 7th using Google’s existing data safety form. Users will be able to see how an app handles account and data deletion “early next year,” though developers will be able to file for an extension until May 31st, 2024.

Google isn’t the first company to implement this kind of requirement. Apple announced a similar policy in October 2021, and it went into effect in June 2022. The App Store rule has similar requirements and caveats, though it doesn’t mandate that users should be able to delete their accounts via the web as well.

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