

Privacy Policy

Version 1.0 Effective 08/01/2023

“Principles”

PhET Interactive Simulations (“PhET”, “we,” “us,” “our,”) cares deeply about student privacy and we orient our website and resource practices to streamline student access without collection of student data.

Resources intended solely for student use are all accessible without the need for login or registration. For a user leveraging these resources without signing into our website, no personally identifiable user information is collected, used, or shared. Some resources available on our website are designed for teachers -- such resources require the user to register for access. During the registration process we attempt to only collect the minimum information necessary to best serve our mission of providing free educational content to a global user base. User information collected by PhET is never used for advertisement purposes.

By visiting the PhET website or any other linked pages, features, content, or applications offered by PhET, or using any of our Services (collectively, the "Services"), you acknowledge that you accept the practices and policies outlined below and you hereby consent that we will collect, use and share your data as described in this Privacy Policy.

For purposes of clarity, this privacy policy applies to the use of the PhET website and PhET simulations hosted at <https://phet.colorado.edu>.

Intended Use

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confirm that they are over the age of 13 in order to register for a PhET account. Thus, no identifiable child information of any kind is intended to be collected.

Student Use

PhET simulations are intended to be used by students in preschool, K-12, or college. However, PhET website registration is not intended nor permitted. Registering users are notified that student accounts are not supported, so no identifiable student information of any kind is intended to be collected.

Data Collection

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is collected from users who choose to create an account on the PhET website or communicate with us. Additionally, we may request personal information at other times, such as when you contact our project, complete a user survey, or otherwise communicate with PhET.

Non-registered Users and Students

No PII is collected from non-registered users. Similarly, no PII is ever collected when a user runs a PhET simulation, whether directly from our website, embedded in other websites or products, or downloaded on a device.

Limited non-personally identifiable information is collected when a simulation is run (simulation name, simulation version, simulation language, timestamp, domain, URL, referrer, simulation type, type of device, browser information, and anonymized IP address), in order to ensure that the simulations are running correctly, count the number of runs for each simulation, create reports on the usage of the simulations by language and country, and to distinguish whether the simulation was run from our website, another website, an application, or another way. This information is used to report to funding agencies on the impact of the PhET simulations globally.

Additionally, the PhET website and PhET simulations collect non-personally identifying information through the use of Google Analytics tracking services to help us measure traffic and to understand more about the demographics and usage patterns of our users (e.g. language and country, device type, page load speed, website navigation usage, etc). Our Google Analytics is configured for “[IP masking](#)” in Universal Analytics (UA) and no IP addresses are logged or stored in Google Analytics 4 (GA4). You can learn more about Google’s practices at <http://www.google.com/policies/privacy/partners>, and view its currently available opt-out options at <https://tools.google.com/dlpage/gaoptout>.

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non-personally identifiable information is also collected: general location (country, state/province, city, zip/postal code), school name, and educational demographic information (subject taught, grade levels, occupation, years of teaching experience). We use this limited information for essential user support (e.g. emailing announcements about relevant new simulations, teacher resources, or opportunities) and project operation needs (e.g. compiling aggregate demographic metrics for grant reporting and fundraising).

Cookie Policy

PhET uses "cookies" and similar technologies as specified in our [Cookie Policy](#) to help operate our website and simulations and collect anonymized analytics to report to our grant funders on our impact.

PhET utilizes NO advertising or marketing tracking cookies.

Please view [PhET's Cookie Policy](#) to find detailed information about the cookies we use and how to set your cookie preferences.

Special Consideration for Legacy Java Simulations

In order to document the amount of use of PhET simulations and to provide the best service to our users, PhET collects a minimal amount of non-personally identifying information upon each legacy simulation start-up such as simulation name, language, and version, operating system name and version, timezone and country, and the number of times the simulation has been opened.

Additionally, for legacy Java sims that are downloaded and run locally, run data is stored on the local device. If connected to the internet, the run data is transmitted to the PhET project. Users may choose to disable this feature for Java simulations. From the File->Preferences menu, choose the Privacy tab and uncheck the box in front of "Allow sending of information to PhET."

Collection of Data from Children

PhET simulations are used by students of all ages, but they are primarily used and designed for K-12 and university students. Although PhET designs the simulations to be used by children, we do not knowingly collect personal data from children.

PhET simulations do not collect personal data. While we do collect some personal data when a user creates a PhET website account, students and children under the age of 13 are ineligible to create a user account on the PhET website. If we become aware that a child under 13 years of age has

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13 are ineligible to create a user account and therefore no PII is requested or collected from child users.

Data Sharing with Third Parties

PhET does not share, rent, or sell any PII (name and/or email) to third parties for advertising or marketing purposes.

How PhET may share PII:

- with third-parties (e.g. vendors, consultants, research collaborators, and other service providers) that perform certain tasks on our behalf,
- with other users of our Services, if you explicitly choose to make your PII visible to other users when contributing teacher activities, providing translations, or engaging in other community-oriented opportunities, and
- when fulfilling the University of Colorado's legal obligations - for example, responding to authorized legal requests and appropriate open records requests.

We report aggregate, anonymized usage data to our funders and to our organizational partners - e.g. which simulations are most popular, what is the use and growth in a particular state or country.

We may also share aggregate or anonymized information that does not include PII (name and/or email) with third parties for any purpose, including for additional research purposes.

Third-Party Authentication

Educators may create a PhET account using their Clever educator account; Clever is a supported federated login provider. For users who choose to create a PhET account using this method, we will collect the user's email address and name from Clever, however no PII is shared from PhET to Clever.

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request. Users have the ability to view, modify, or delete their own information. Requests for account deletions by other authorized parties, such as school administrators or parents, should be sent to phethelp@colorado.edu.

The University of Colorado and PhET Interactive Simulations intend to continue operating PhET as a project at the University of Colorado Boulder in perpetuity; however, in the unexpected event of PhET's merger or acquisition, user data may be transferred for their use consistent with this Privacy Policy.

Security

A user account is not required to access the simulations. Therefore, student users never need an account to use the PhET website and PhET simulations.

A user account is required to access some teacher-facing content (such as teacher-uploaded activities, teaching tips, video primers). All user accounts require a username and password created by the user. PhET does not provide any accounts managed by a party other than the user, such as accounts managed by teachers, parents, or school districts.

We require that users create accounts with sufficiently complex passwords in order to protect user information.

Data Confidentiality and Storage

PhET takes the confidentiality of user PII very seriously. We employ reasonable security practices for protecting user information. We tightly restrict access to user information to PhET employees, agents, and contractors for which this access is essential; these parties are subject to confidentiality obligations.

By default, the transmission of all user communications is served over HTTPS and therefore encrypted. Since the HTTPS protocol uses Secure Socket Layer (SSL), the transmission of user communications are encrypted using unique keys and users can secure information with their own user supplied encryption keys. Users can manually input a link to receive simulations via regular HTTP, but no such links are provided through website navigation.

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If PhET becomes aware of a systems security breach, we will send an email with undue delay to all registered users notifying them of the breach and steps to remedy. The email will include any data fields that were compromised, and provide instructions for users to change their password and instructions to delete their PhET account.

Additionally, in the case of a breach, we will report an incident to the University of Colorado Office of Information Security immediately after becoming aware of the breach. The policies of this office for responding to a data breach are outlined here:

<https://www.cu.edu/security/system-wide-incident-response-procedure-data-breaches>

Data Retention

Upon user account deletion, user PII is removed from all active databases.

PhET will email users after 5 years of inactivity. If the user does not sign into their account within 30 days, the account will be deleted and all personal information removed from our databases.

User PII may be retained indefinitely in automated backups of our website.

User Interactions and User Provided Content

No mechanism exists for users to have social interactions with other users or students on the PhET website.

Registered users that upload teaching activities may optionally disclose personal contact information on their activities to facilitate feedback and contact with other teachers. PhET has no means to prevent PII from being contained in activity submissions. PII included in uploaded activities is at the discretion of the user. Accordingly, users should be careful about including PII in uploaded activities.

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Advertising

No advertisements or ad tracking technologies are utilized by PhET in our simulations or on our website. Specifically, we do not use traditional advertisements, behavioral advertisements, nor ad tracking on the PhET website, in the PhET simulations, or with third-party websites and services.

We do not allow any third parties to use any user's data to create an automated profile, engage in data enhancement, conduct social advertising, or target advertising to students, parents, teachers, or the school.

Privacy Policy Changes

PhET reserves the right to modify this Privacy Policy at any time by posting the revised version with an updated version and effective date. If this Privacy Policy is changed in a material manner, PhET will notify all registered users via email about the change. Changes will apply to PII we already hold, as well as to new information we create or receive after the change occurs. To stay informed about changes to the privacy policy, we recommend our users revisit this page periodically.

Disclaimer

The information provided in this privacy statement should not be construed as business, legal or other advice, or as guaranteeing the security of information provided through the PhET or University of Colorado websites.

This policy does not apply to the use of PhET Interoperable (PhET-iO) simulations, a separate product by PhET Interactive Simulations which includes enhanced capabilities for interoperability with third-party educational platforms. PhET-iO simulations are clearly identifiable by their PhET-iO logo. PhET-iO simulations do not collect PII; however, these simulations have the capability of collecting additional data, including, but not limited to, the end user's interaction history or the state



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