

How do I turn off private browsing on my phone and go back to normal mode?

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Private browsing isn't something you flip on and off like a setting, it's a completely separate tab session. On the iPhone it's a different "tab group," on Android Chrome it's a separate stack of tabs with a spy-hat icon. So "turning it off" really just means switching back to your regular tabs, or in Chrome's case, closing the private ones out entirely. Here's how that works on both platforms, plus how to shut the option down for good if that's what you're after.

iPhone: Get Out of Private Browsing in Safari

On iOS 17 and later, Safari organizes tabs into groups, and Private is just one of them sitting next to your regular one.

1. Open Safari.
2. Tap the Tabs button (bottom right, the two overlapping squares).
3. At the bottom, tap the group name that currently says Private .
4. Pick your regular tab group from the list, it'll be labeled with a number, like "6 Tabs," or "Start Page" if you don't have any open.
5. Tap the tab you want to view, or tap Done .

You'll know it worked because the address bar turns white or grey. While you're in Private Browsing, it's black or dark, that color is the fastest way to check which mode you're in without digging through menus.

On iOS 16 or earlier, the flow is nearly identical: tap Tabs, tap the "Private" label at the top to open the Tab Groups list, then tap your regular group.

Quote: If you've turned on Locked Private Browsing (Settings > Safari), your private tabs lock automatically the moment you switch away or lock your phone. You'll need Face ID, Touch ID, or your passcode to get back into them later, which is worth knowing if you're switching tabs specifically because someone's about to look at your screen.

Android: Close Out of Incognito in Chrome

Chrome doesn't let you "exit" Incognito the way Safari lets you switch tab groups, you close the incognito tabs, and that ends the session.

1. Open Chrome and tap the tab switcher icon at the top right (it shows a number).
2. Tap Incognito tabs to see everything open in that session.
3. Tap the X on each tab to close them one by one, or tap the three-dot menu and choose Close Incognito tabs to clear all of them at once.

There's also a shortcut: if you check your notification shade, you'll usually see an "Incognito tabs open" notification with a Close all option right there, no need to open Chrome first.

Once every incognito tab is closed, Chrome drops you back into your normal tabs automatically, and anything from that session, history, cookies, form data, is gone for good. There's no undo for it.

Firefox and Samsung Internet

Same idea, different labels. In Firefox for Android, tap the tab icon, switch to the private tabs tray (the mask icon), and close each tab with the X, or use "Close all tabs" from the menu. Samsung Internet works almost identically to Chrome, tap the tab count, switch to the Secret tab group, and close what's open there.

Want Private Browsing Gone Permanently?

Neither iOS nor Android has a plain toggle for this, but there are workarounds depending on the platform.

On iPhone: go to Settings > Screen Time > Content & Privacy Restrictions, turn that on if it isn't already, then go to Content Restrictions > Web Content and select Limit Adult Websites. This removes the option to open a private tab in Safari entirely. It's not truly permanent, anyone who knows the Screen Time passcode can go back and turn the restriction off, but it does stop Private Browsing from showing up in the meantime.

On Android: there's no equivalent built into Chrome's settings. For a kid's phone, Google Family Link can restrict incognito mode. For a work or school-managed device, it comes down to whatever policy IT has pushed through their MDM software, not something you can toggle yourself.