

Your Information on the Internet

There is a lot of information about you on the Internet. This can be broken down into the following categories:

- Information you put on the Internet for your use
 - a. Information you enter through applications like Contacts
 - b. Your data files that are backed up to Internet Storage
- Information others collect about you and store on the Internet
 - a. Information you knowingly give companies, e.g. login and account information
 - b. Information others collect about you often without your permission, e.g. ad tracking (which is relatively benign) or malware that collects information about you for identity theft

I have done other talks on Internet security issues which you can find here

<http://davetaenzer.com/docs/>

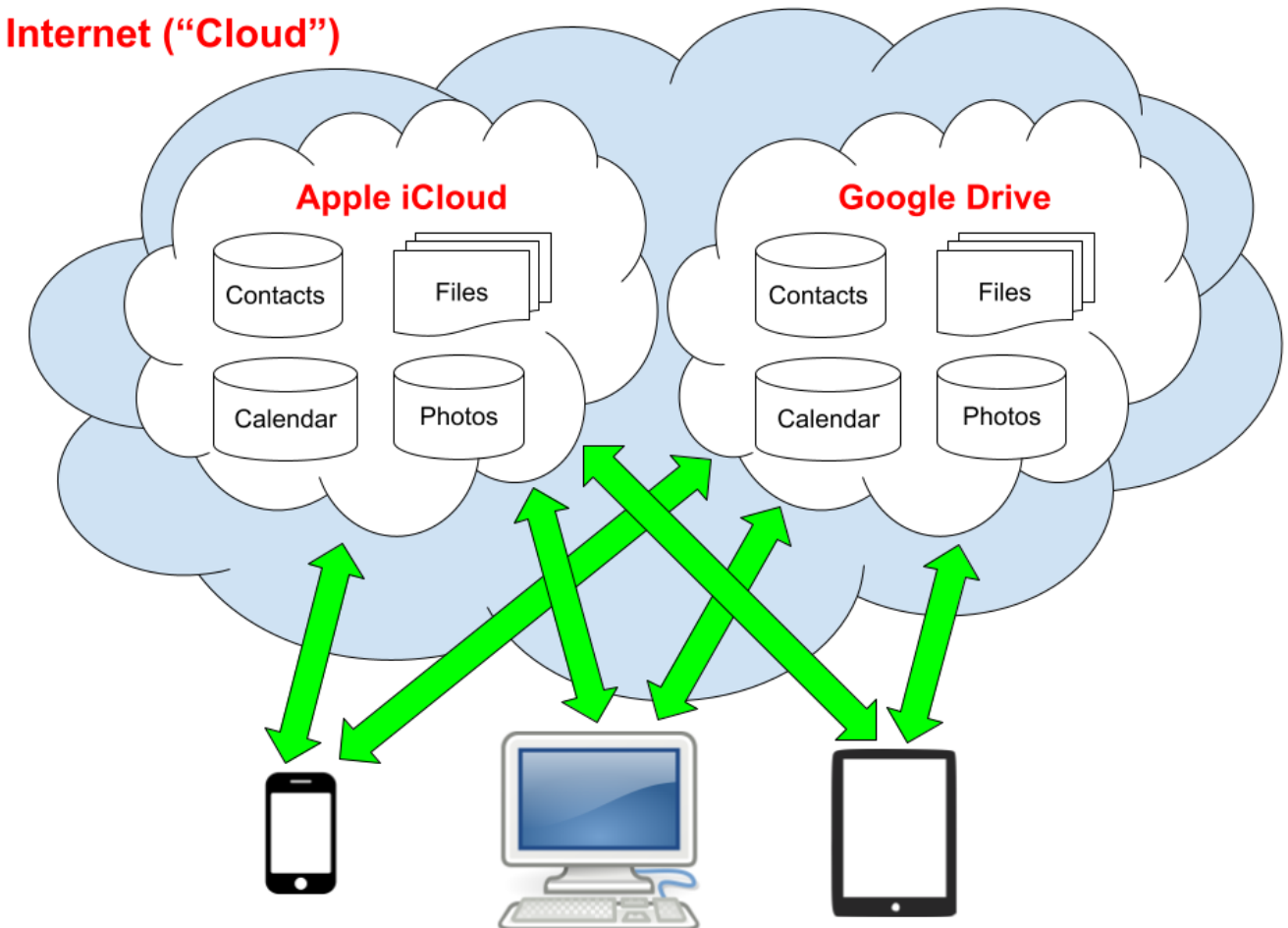
This talk is about the information you put on the Internet (aka. “Cloud”) through using applications and web sites.

If you use email, messages, calendar, contacts, notes and many other apps on your phone or other devices, this is normally stored on the Cloud in your Cloud accounts.

This is a good thing since this information is secure and backed up by the Cloud vendors and is made available to you on any of your devices if you have them set up correctly.

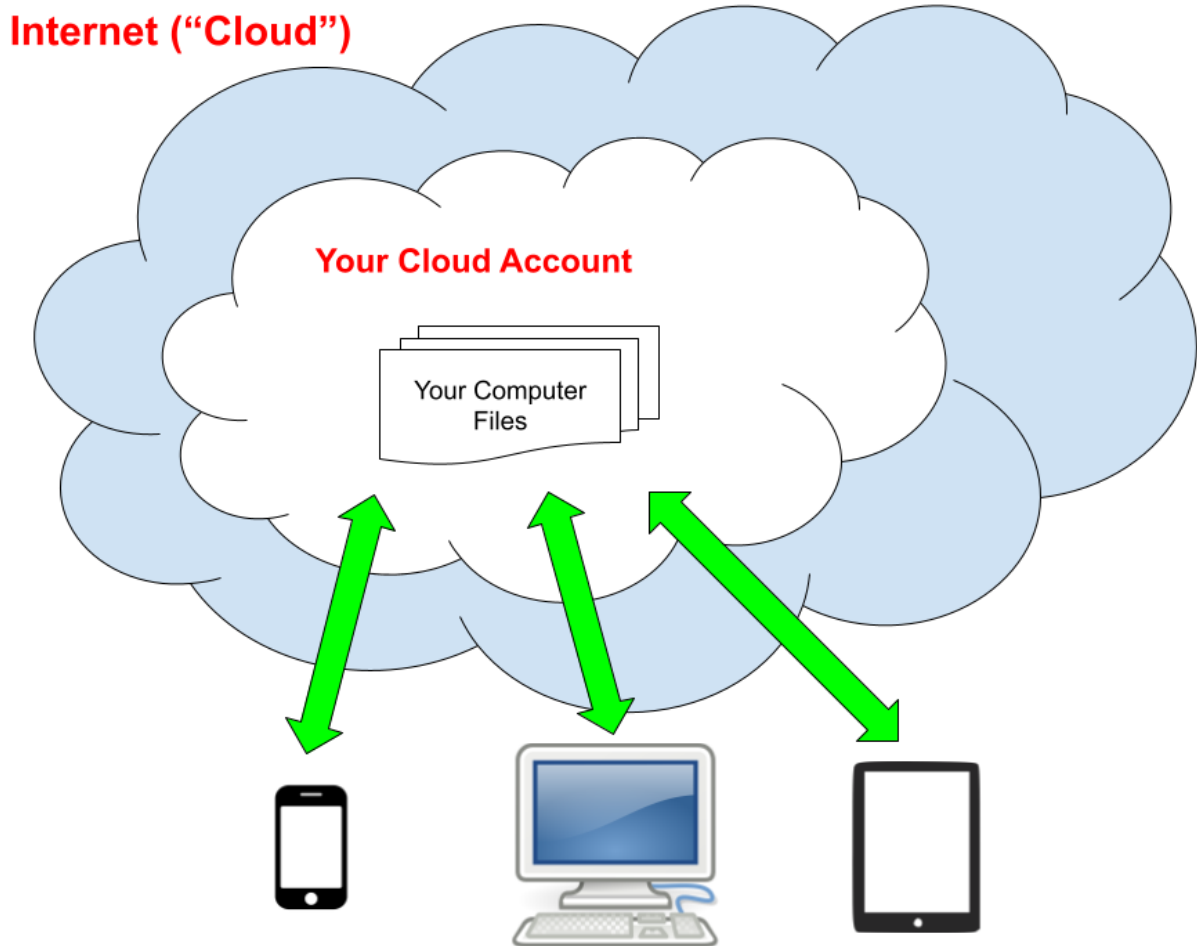
If you use email, you have a Cloud account with your email provider and if you have multiple emails, you have a Cloud account associated with each of them. You may also have Cloud accounts with a hardware vendor, like Apple (the “iCloud”) if you have an iPhone, iPad or Mac.

For example, if you have a @gmail (Google) account and an iPhone, you have at least two Cloud accounts:



In addition to your email messages, your Cloud accounts can store contacts, events in calendars, photos, notes, messages along with other types of information (data files). The green arrows in this picture represent the settings on your device that control which Cloud information is used for each of your applications (apps).

Some vendors, like Apple, Google and Microsoft and Dropbox, offer software which will automatically back up files from your computer and store them on the Cloud. This mirrors the files on your computer so it always has the latest version of each file.

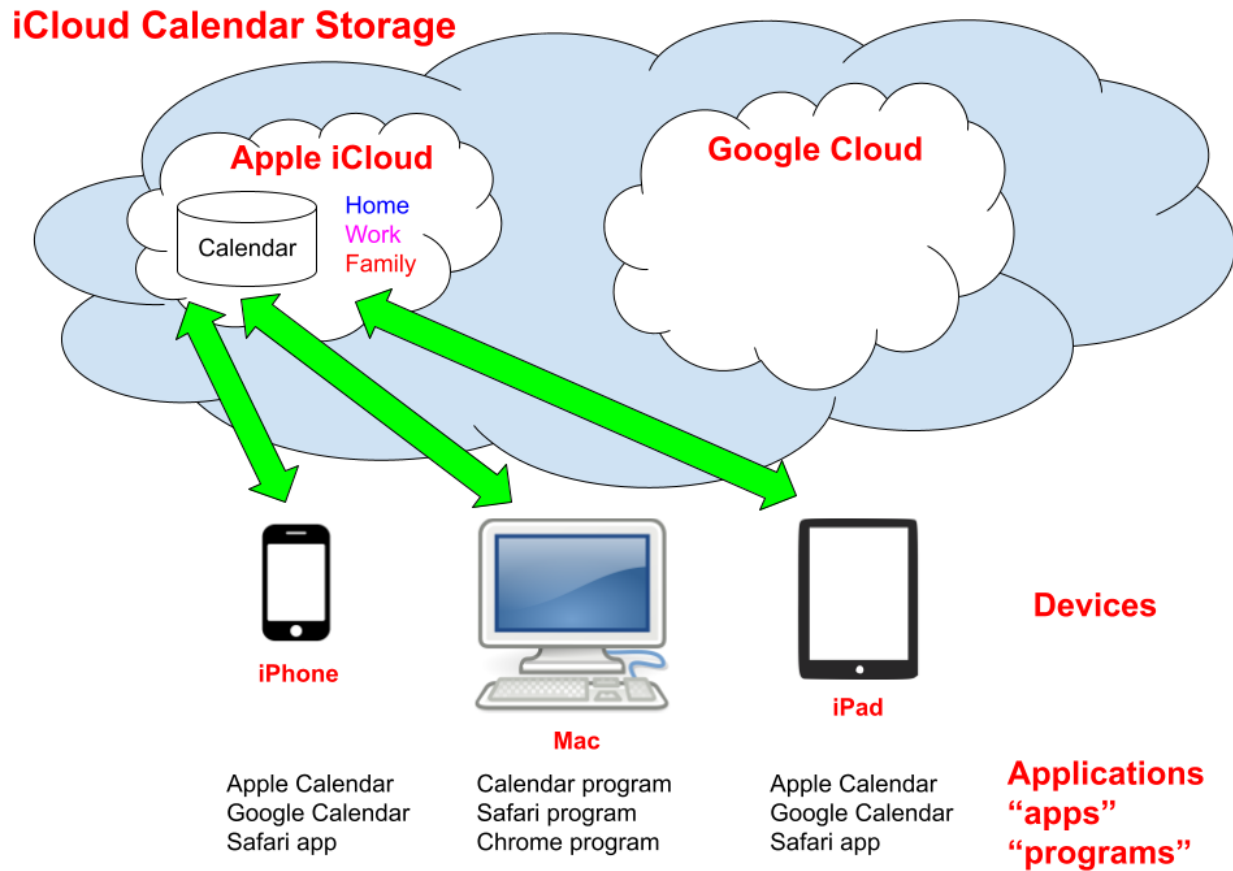


This can be very handy since you can access these files from your other devices or via a web (browser) application that lets you view these files from any computer connected to the Internet. You have to log in securely, so only you can access this information through a browser.

On Apple devices, you can set up sharing of your Mac Desktop and Documents and view them on portable apps with the Apple Files app.

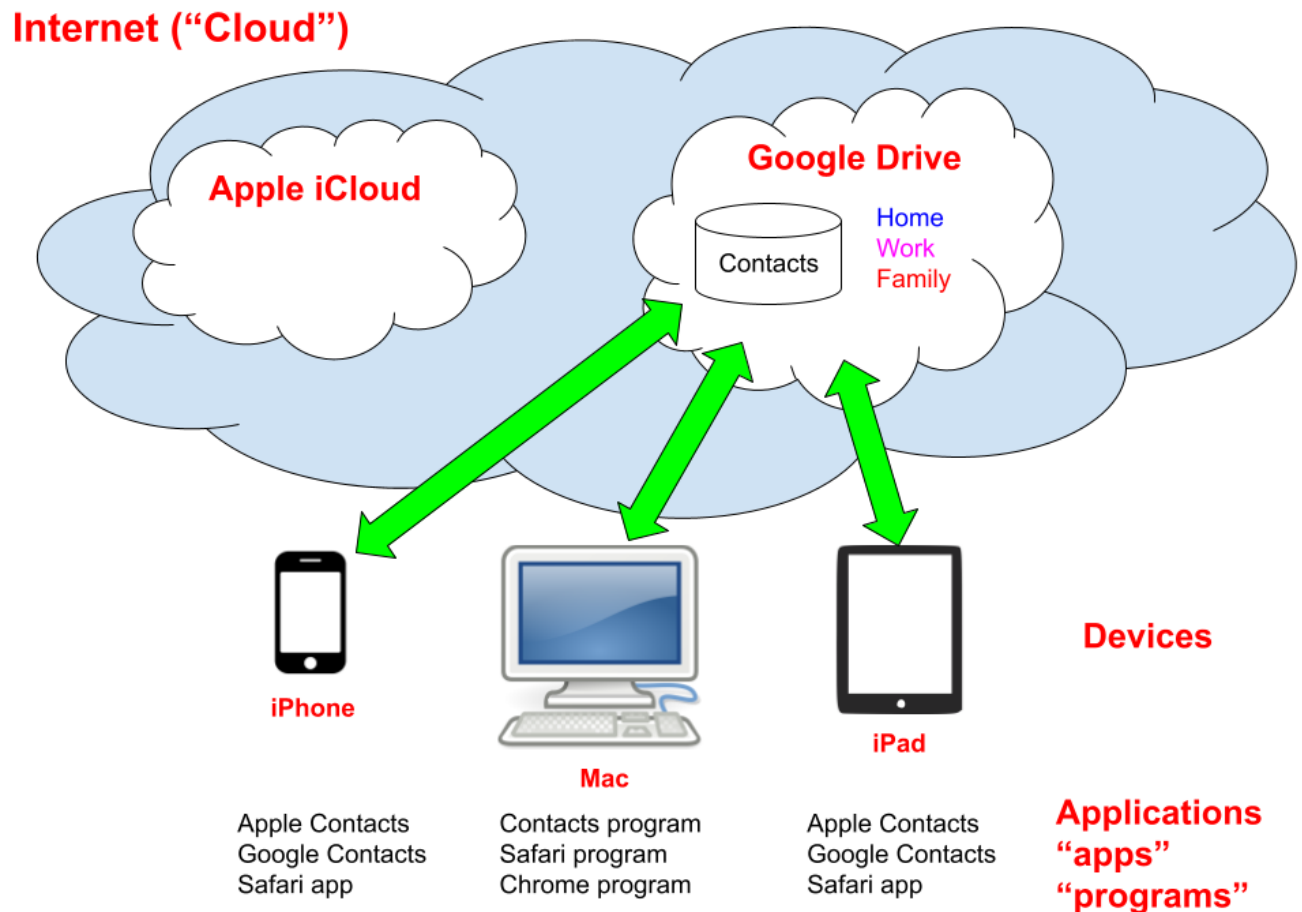
Example: Calendar Information

If you use Apple products, by default they will store your calendar events on the Apple Cloud (aka “iCloud”). This looks like this:



The fact that your information is stored on the Apple iCloud does not mean that you need to use the Apple calendar app on your portable devices (iPhone and iPads) or the Apple Calendar program on your Mac. You can easily set up many other programs or websites to view and edit your calendar.

If you use a mix of Apple and non-Apple devices, it is often useful to store your calendar information on the Google Cloud, which looks like this:

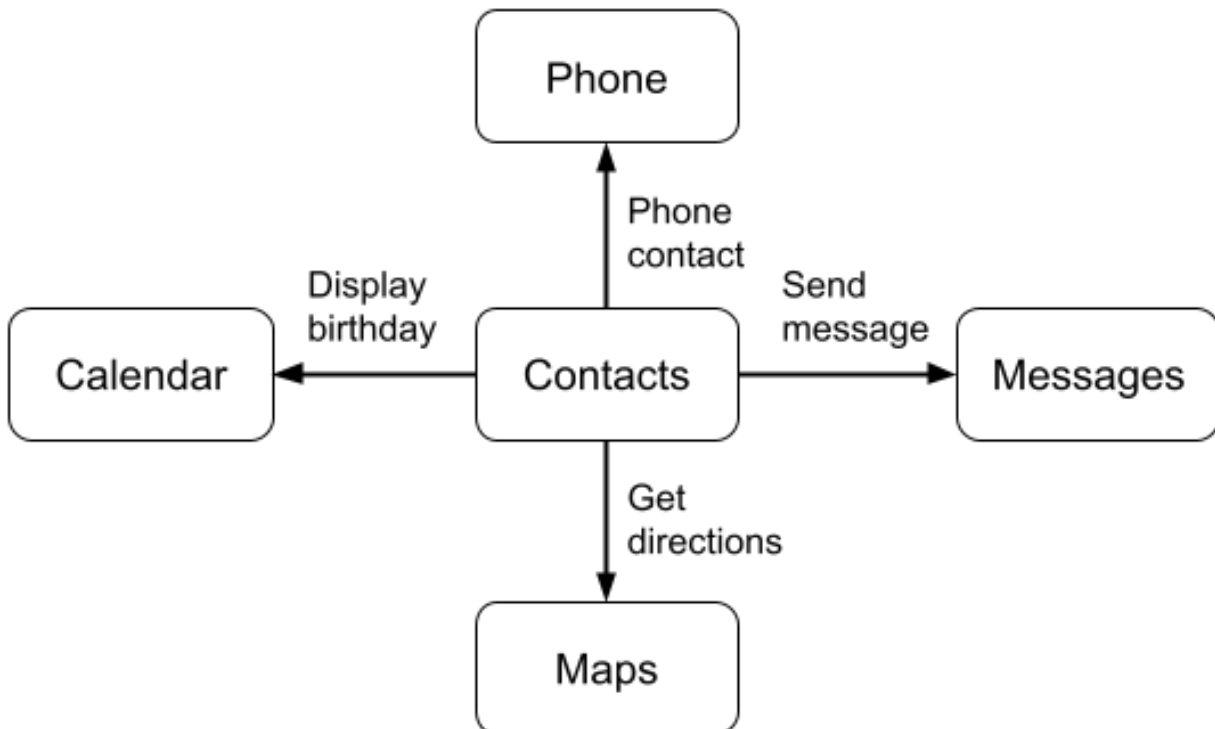


This means that you can view your contact information via a specific program or app or via the Google Calendar webpage. This website provides a very helpful and easy to use interface to your calendars and events.

You can have any number of named calendars on these Cloud Storage systems and put events in different calendars. They are often displayed in different colors. For example, you could put all your Senior Planet Zoom sessions in a Senior Planet calendar and give it a special color.

How Applications Use Your Information

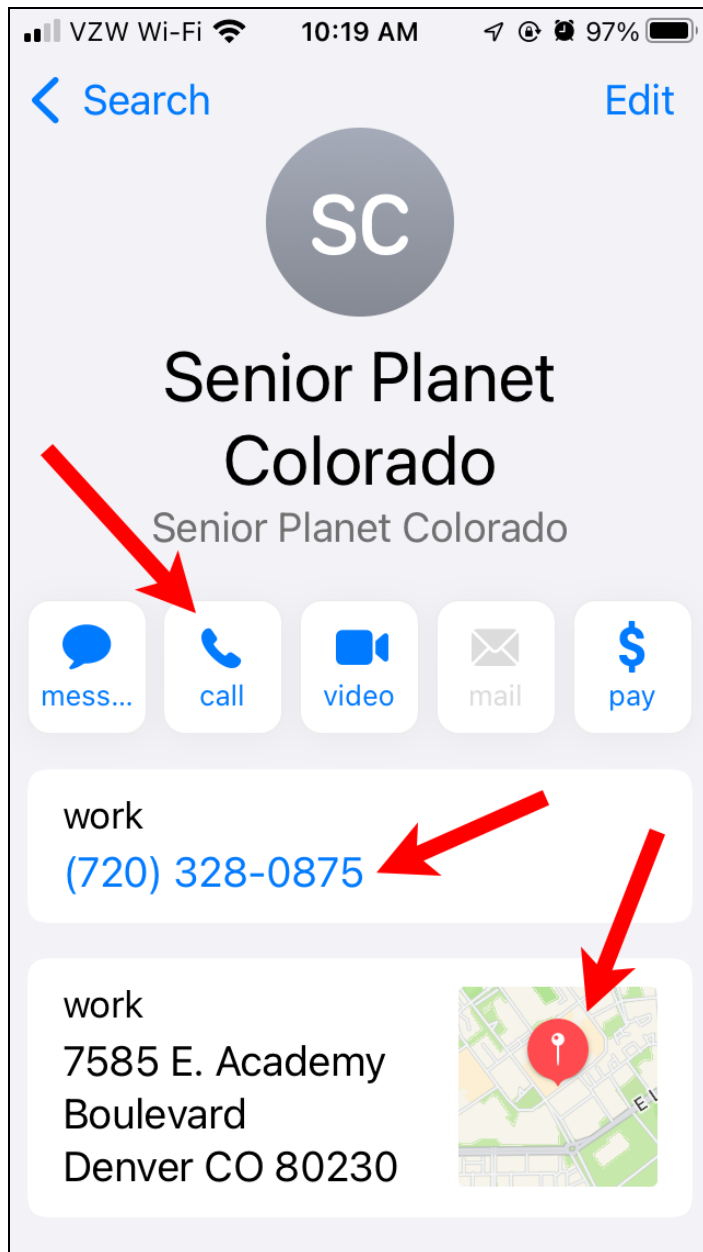
One of the main reasons to put your address book information on the Cloud is that all of your applications can then use this information:



For contact information, you can easily phone a contact either by looking them up in your Phone app or clicking on the phone number in the Contacts app. Similarly you can easily send them a text message if you put their cell phone number into your contacts information. You can do this from the Contacts or Messages app.

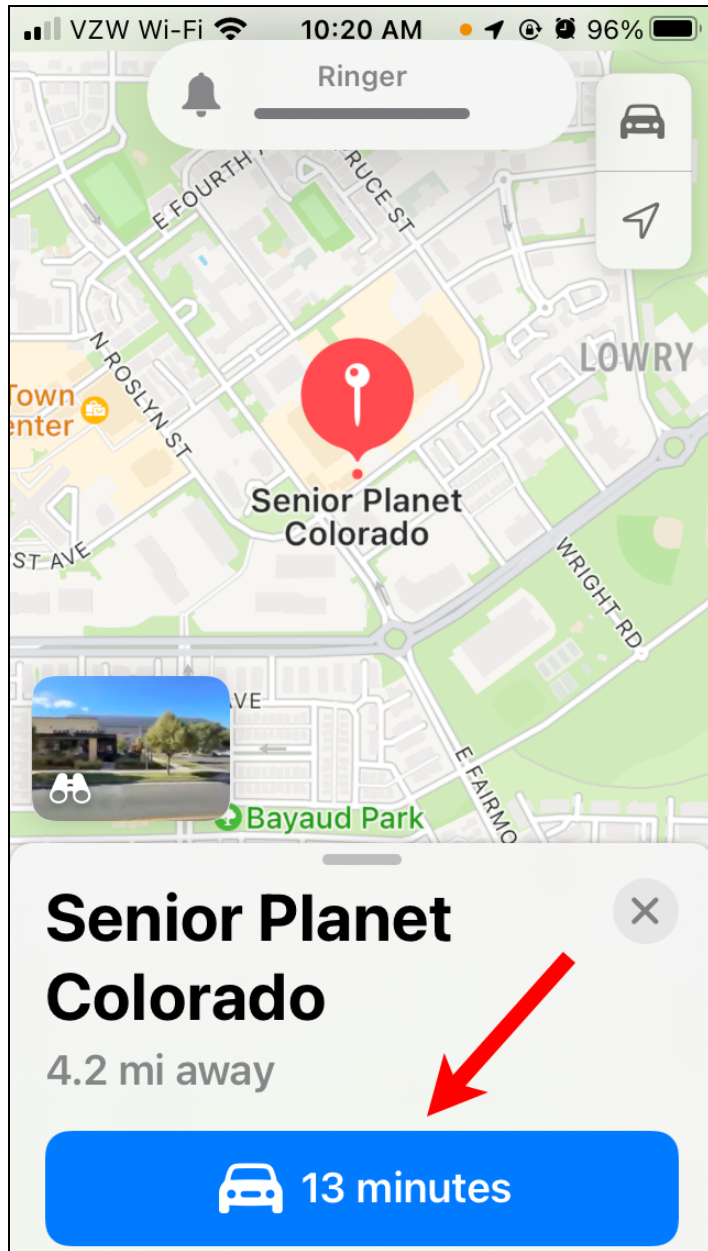
You can click on the address of a contact to see a Map and get directions and if you put in the birthday of the contact, it can appear on the Calendar app on your smartphone or calendar program or website on your computer. This calendar is called “Birthdays” in most systems.

This is what a contact looks like on an iPhone. If I open my Contact app for Senior Planet Colorado, I can use this information for the other apps:



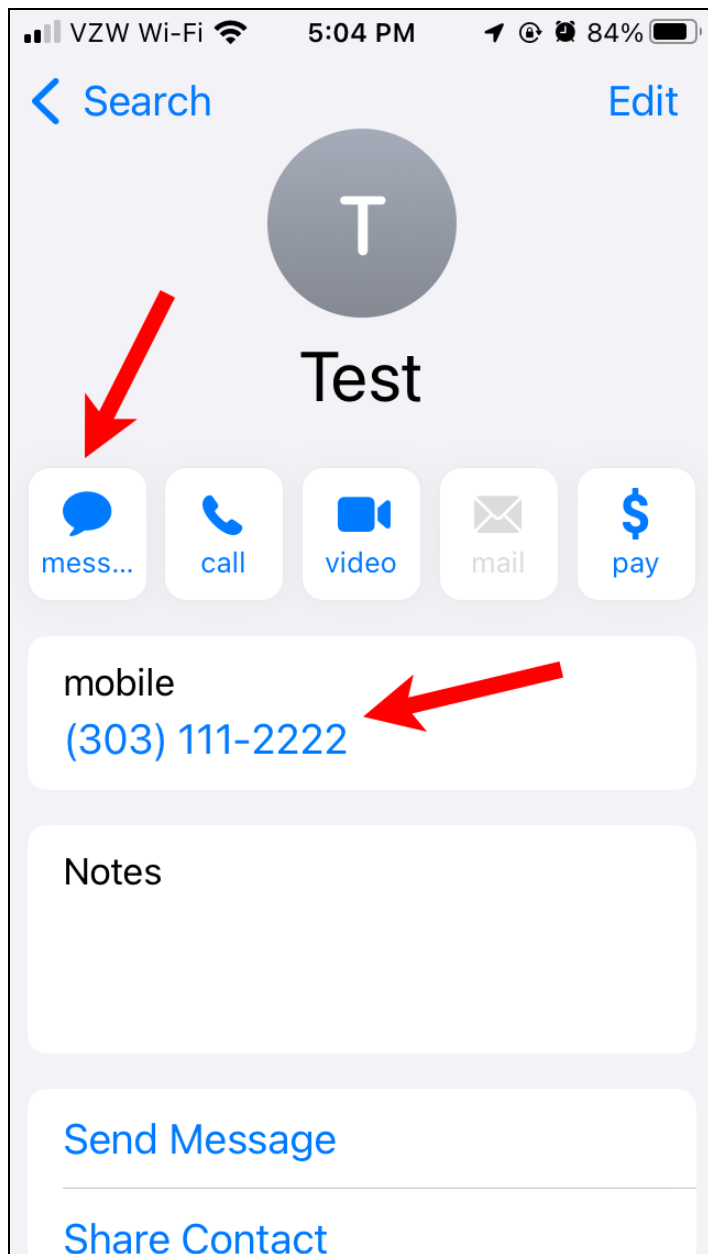
If you tap on the phone number or the Call button, it will open the Phone app and call the person.

If you click on the address or map, it will open the Map app:

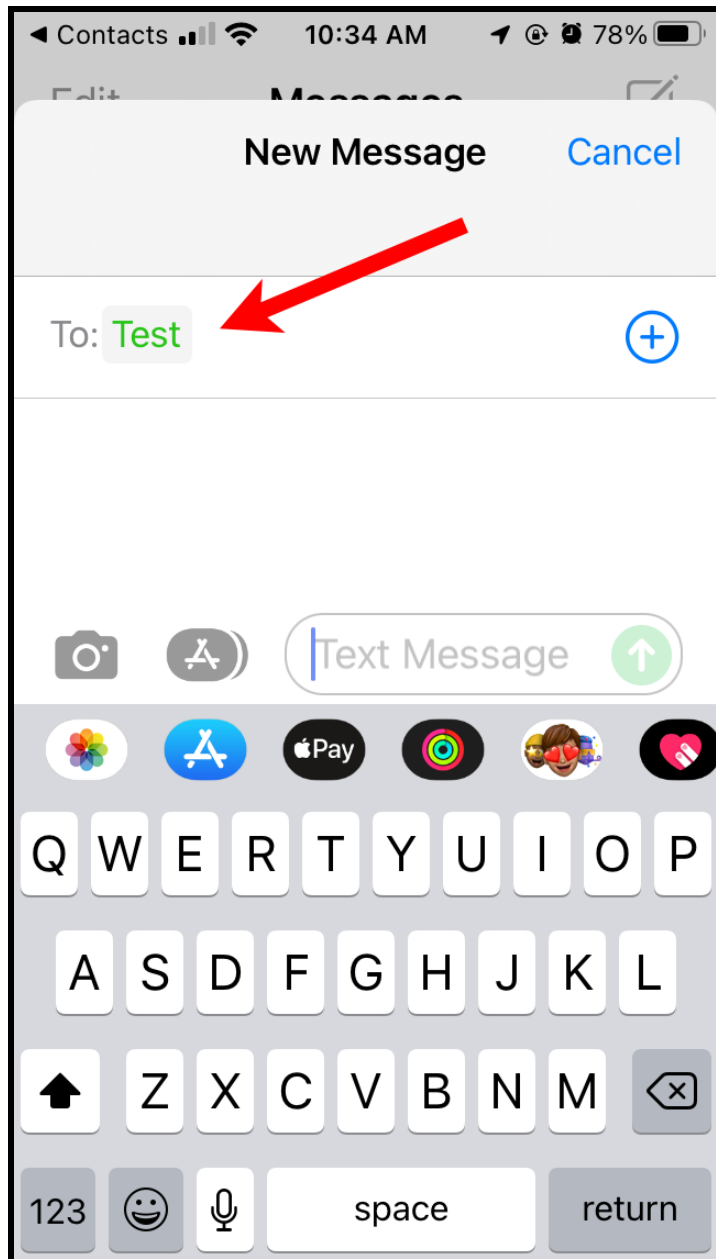


You can then click on the blue button at the bottom to get driving directions.

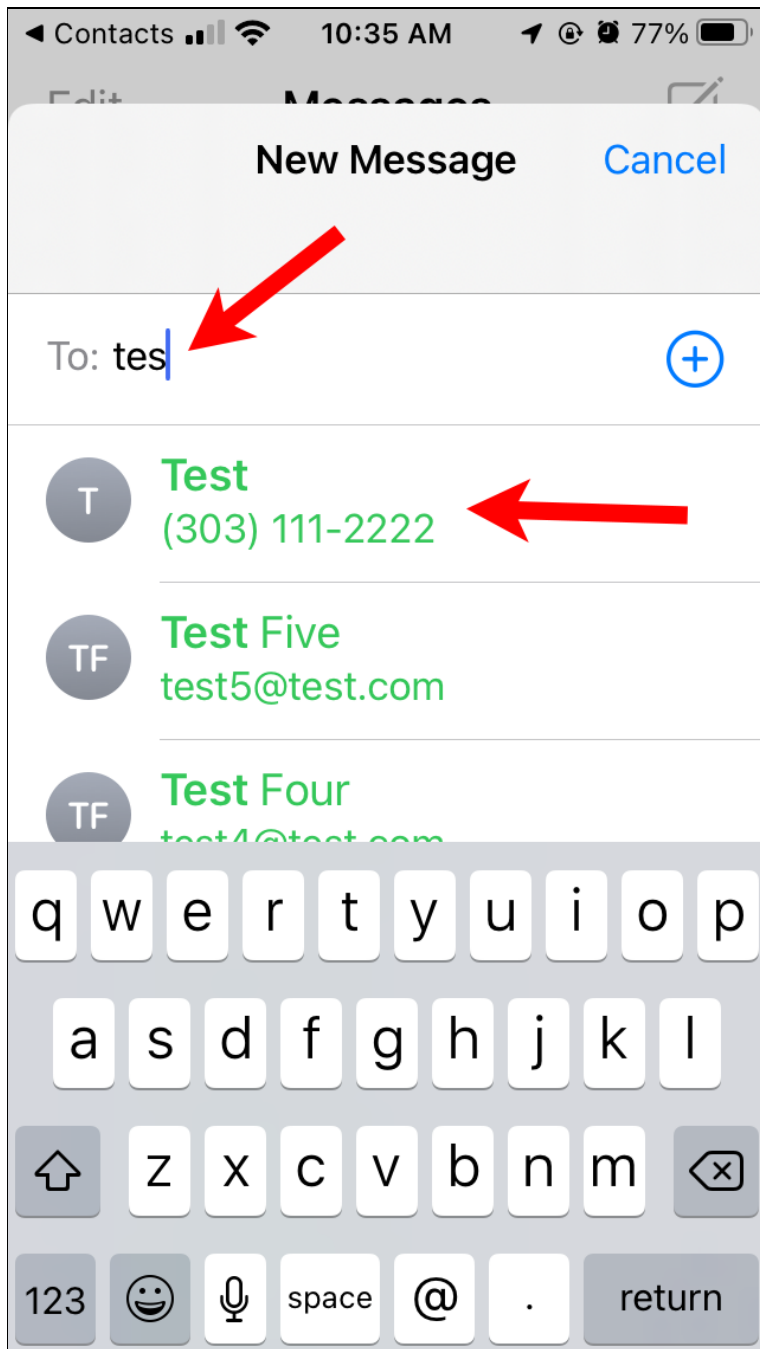
If you have a contact with a mobile number:



You can click on the Message button to start a text message to this contact.

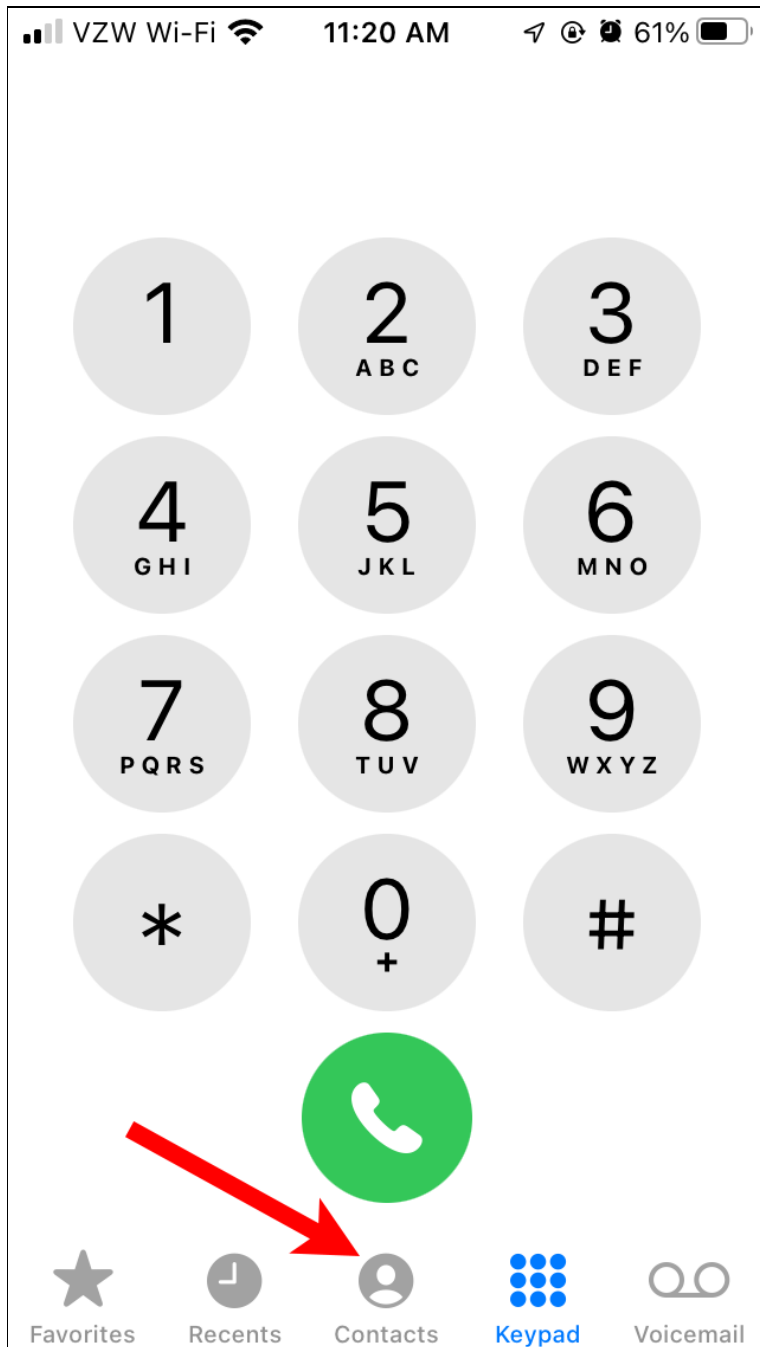


You can also start in the Message app and type in part of the contact name, in this case “tes”:

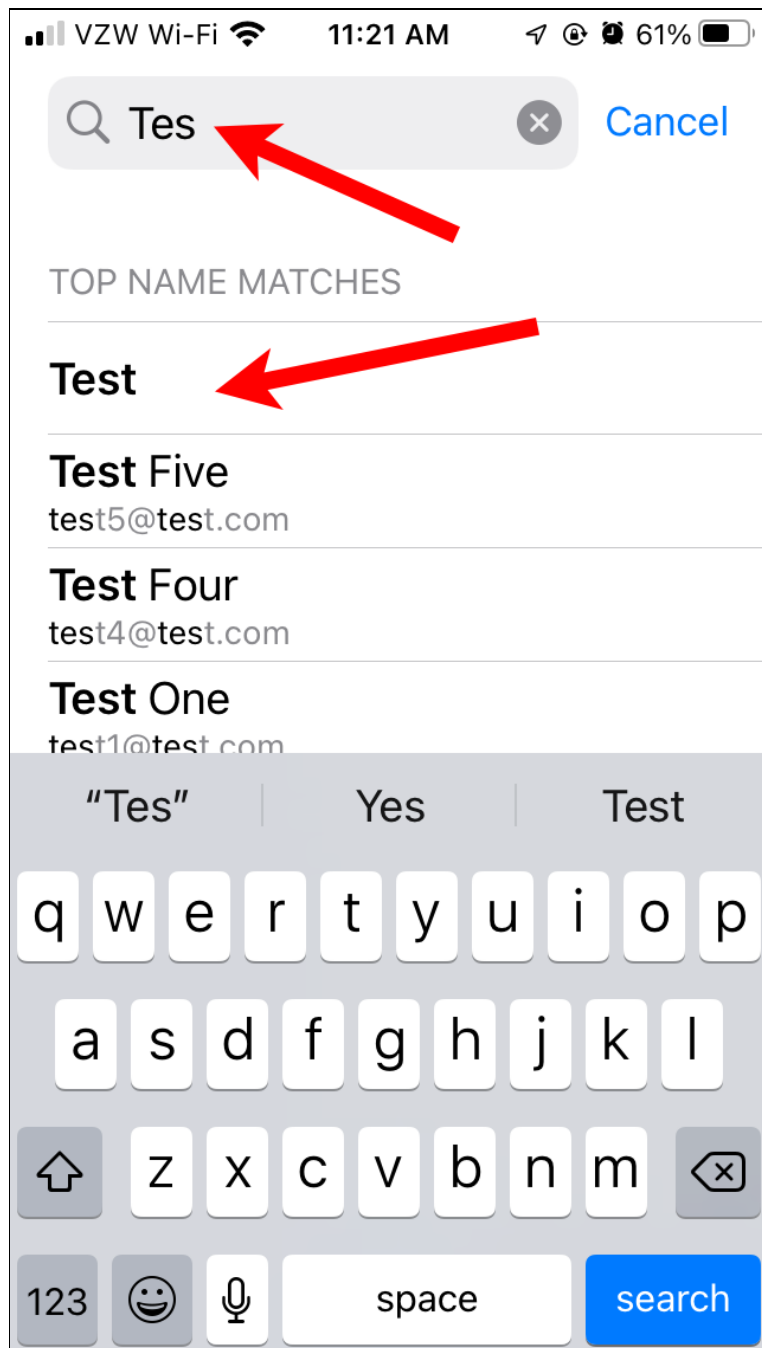


The Messages app will display all the contacts that match and you just tap on the right one to start a message to them.

When you open the Phone app on an iPhone there is a Contact button at the bottom:



If you click on the Contacts button, it will bring up the Contacts display where you can type in part of the name (as shown above):



The apps on Android phones work in a very similar fashion.

In addition to using Contact info in other apps, you can also reference contact info with your voice assistant, e.g. Siri on an iPhone or iPad or Google Assistant on Android smartphones.

For example, if you had a contact for Senior Planet Colorado, you can say things like:

- “Call Senior Planet Colorado”
- “Directions to Senior Planet Colorado”

The first would call the number associated with the contact and the second would start the Maps and show directions to the contact address.

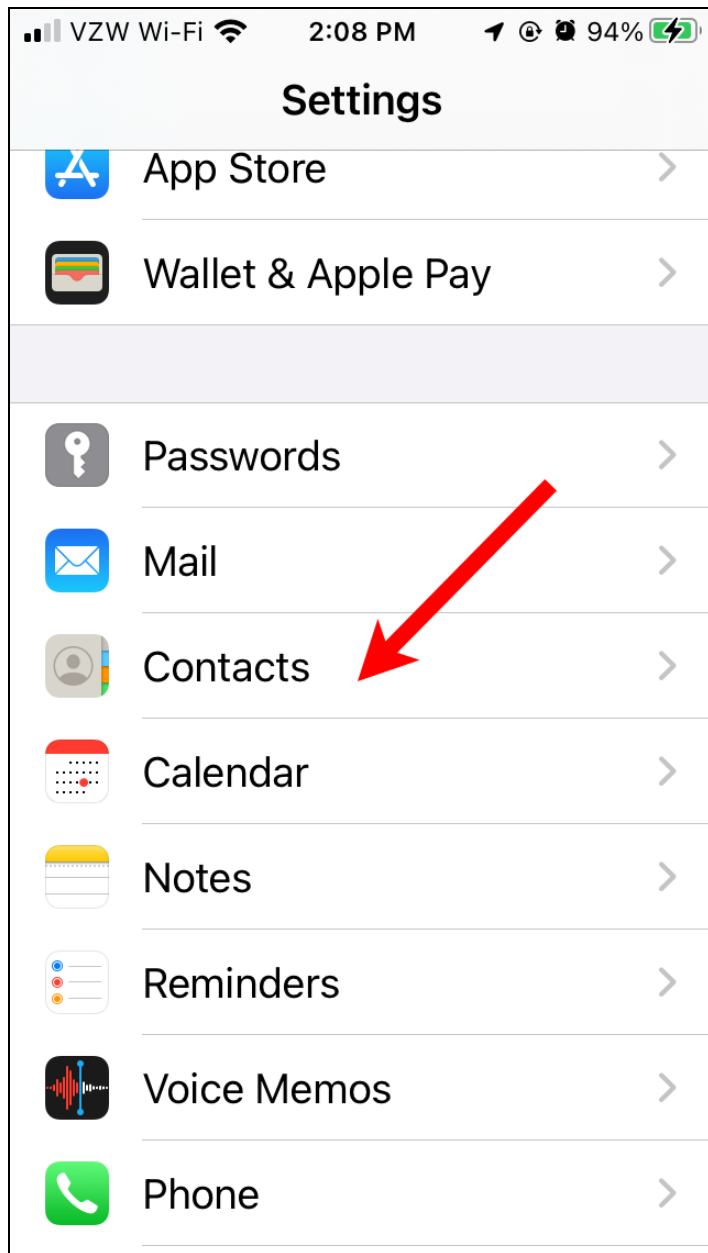
If the contact has a mobile (cell phone) number, you can also say:

- “Text Senior Planet Colorado”

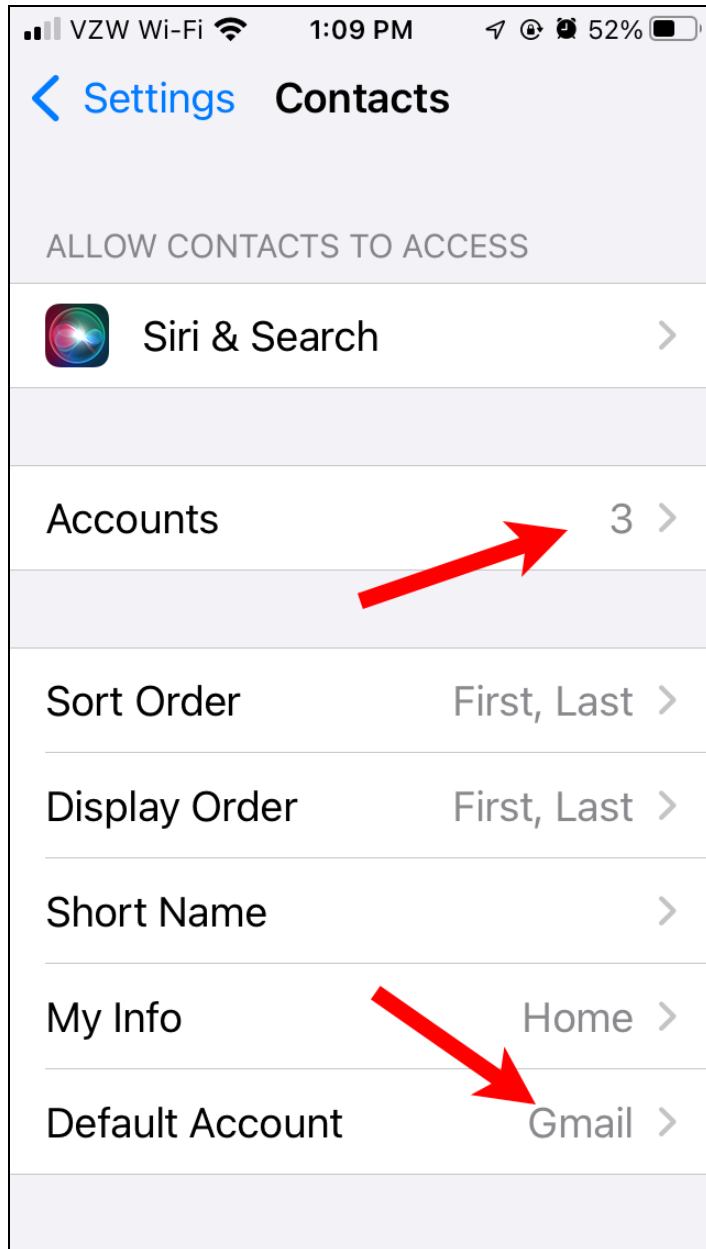
The voice assistant will then ask you to say the message you want to send to that contact.

Account Settings

The account settings on each device determine which accounts are used for each app and where new data is stored. For example, on an iPhone, you can view your Contact settings by opening the Settings app and tapping Contacts:

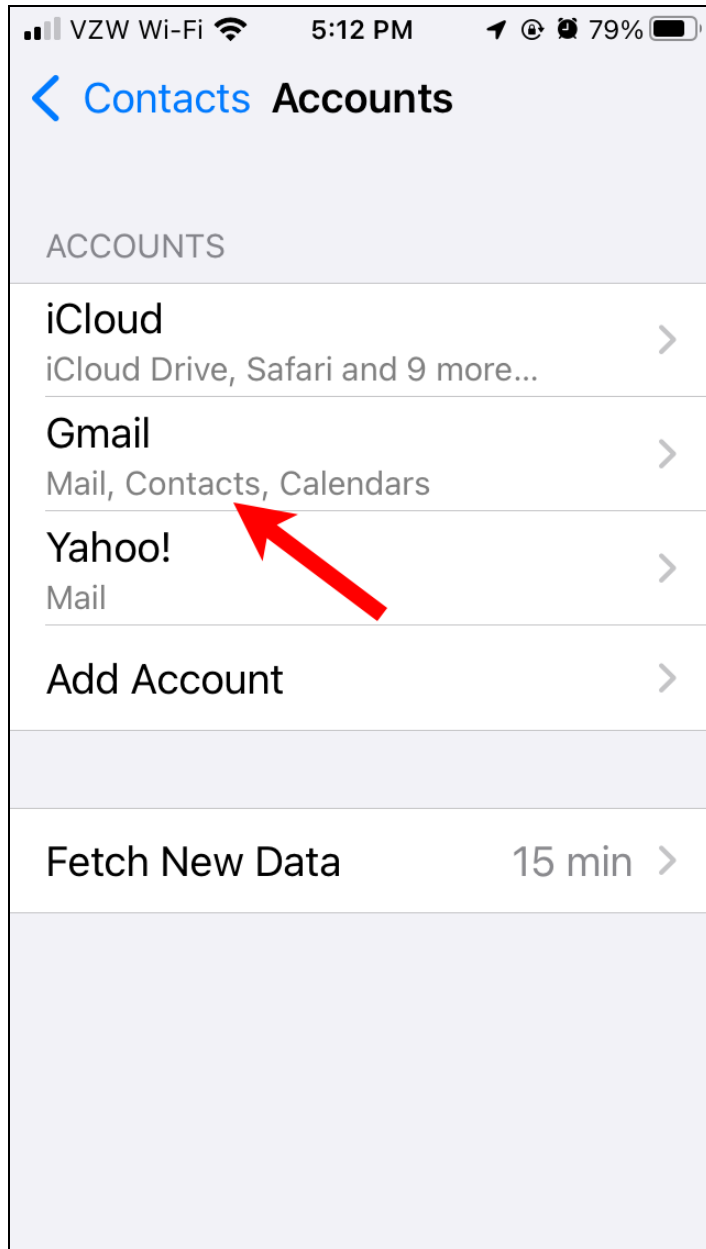


This brings up the Contacts Settings:



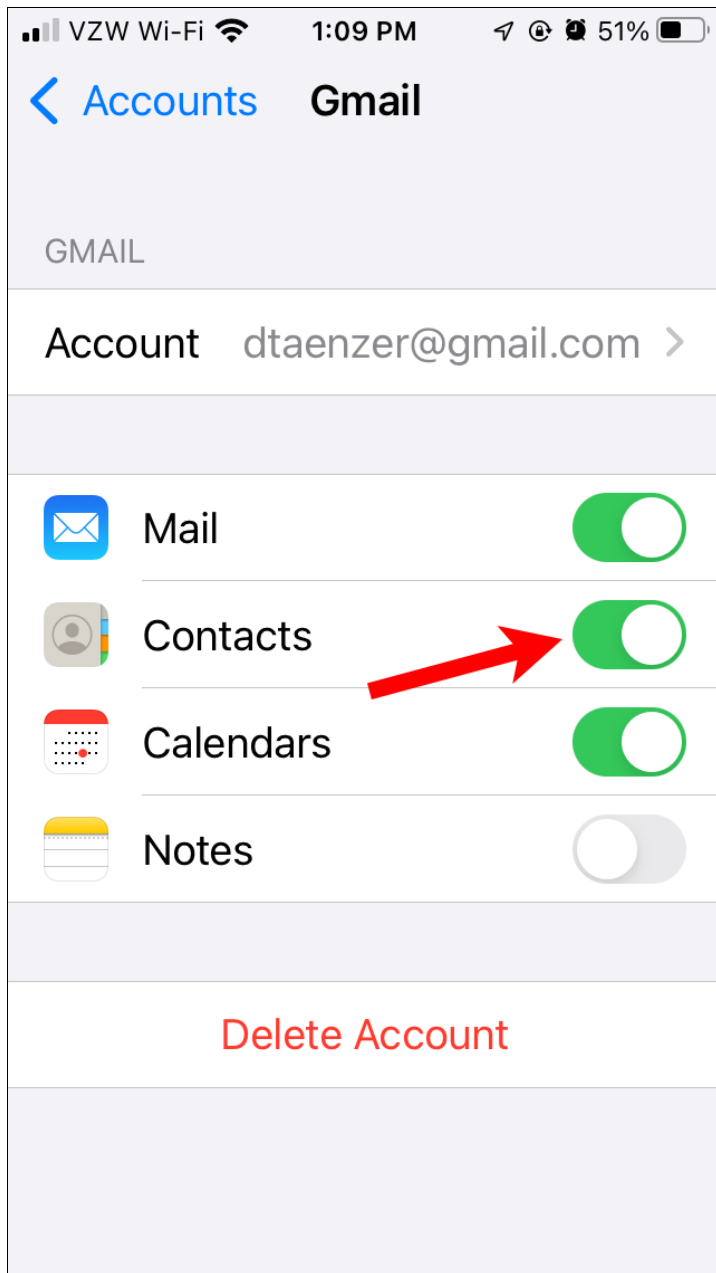
The two most important things here are Accounts which displays your accounts and Default account which determines which account is used when you add a new contact.

When you click the Accounts on the Contacts settings page:



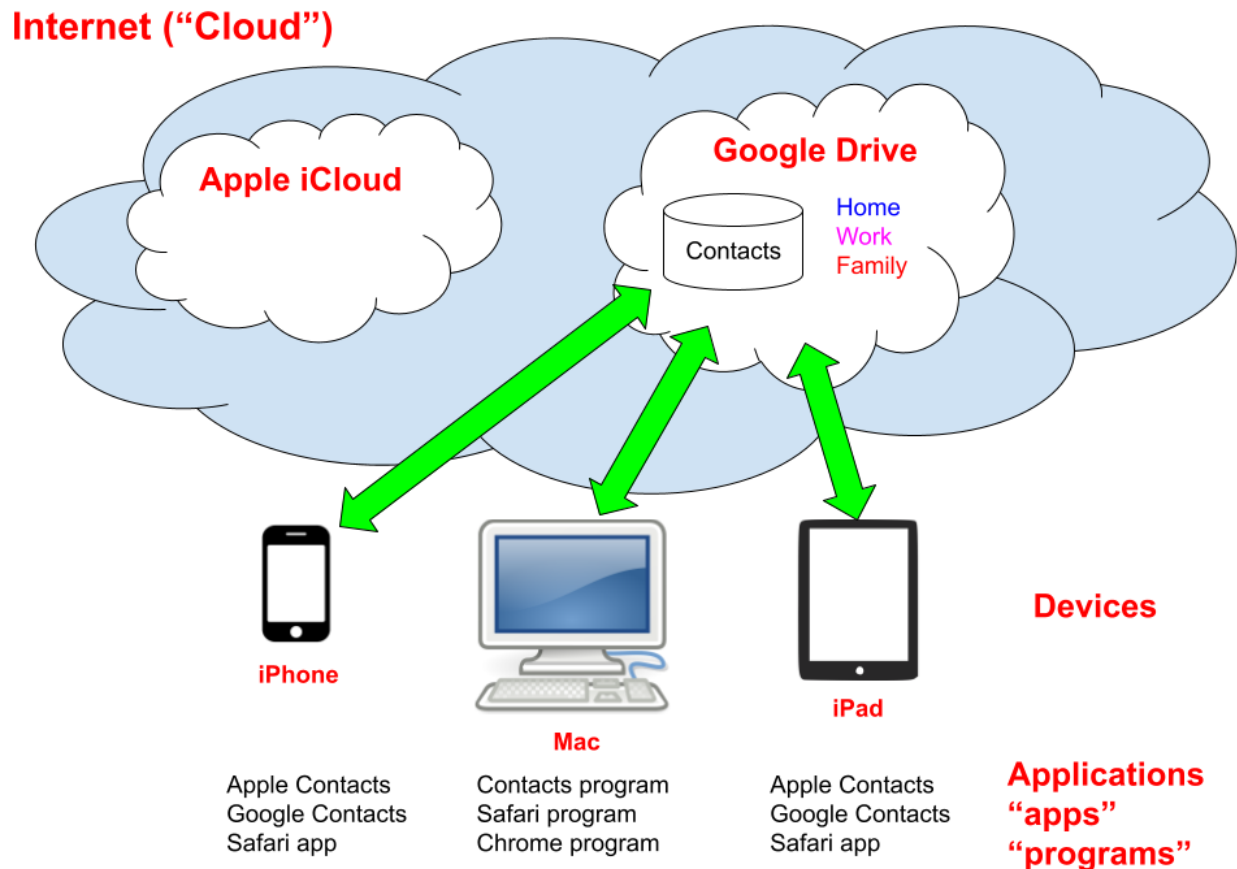
In this case there are three accounts on this iPhone: iCloud (Apple), Gmail (Google) and a Yahoo email account. Each account lists what is active on that account. In this case, only the Gmail account is used for contact information and the iCloud and Yahoo accounts are not.

If you click on an account, like Gmail, it shows what information is used for that account:



In this case, my Gmail account is used for email, contacts and calendars. The green switches are used to enable or disable data access for this account for each type of data.

These correspond the green arrows in the Gmail contacts picture:



You can easily add new accounts for any of your information (e.g. email) and control for each one what type of information you want to store on that account.

With the exception of email, it is often good to choose only one account for each type of data but it is possible to use multiple accounts. If you do this, you need to make sure all of your devices are using the same accounts in the same way and the Default Account for each app is the same.

If you don't do this, you may find that when you add a contact or calendar event on one device, it is not visible on your other devices.

Other Information You Put on the Internet

You are also asked for information by websites when you set up accounts. They usually offer privacy pages and end-user agreements that almost no one reads.

It is important to understand how your information will be used and whether the company or organization you are giving it to will sell or share it with other companies or organizations.

This is detailed in the privacy statement and sometimes can be controlled by privacy settings on the website. The privacy settings are often hard to find and even harder to understand, but it is often useful to try to control how your information may be used.

Some companies, like on-line stores, offer to save your credit card information. This may be a reasonable option if you shop there frequently or you can use a service like PayPal to make purchases. This hides your credit card information from the company that is selling you the goods or services.

There have been many security breaches at various companies over the past few years. Keep this in mind when you are giving your information to companies. Be very careful with personal information, like social security numbers, bank account or credit card information.

Ad Tracking

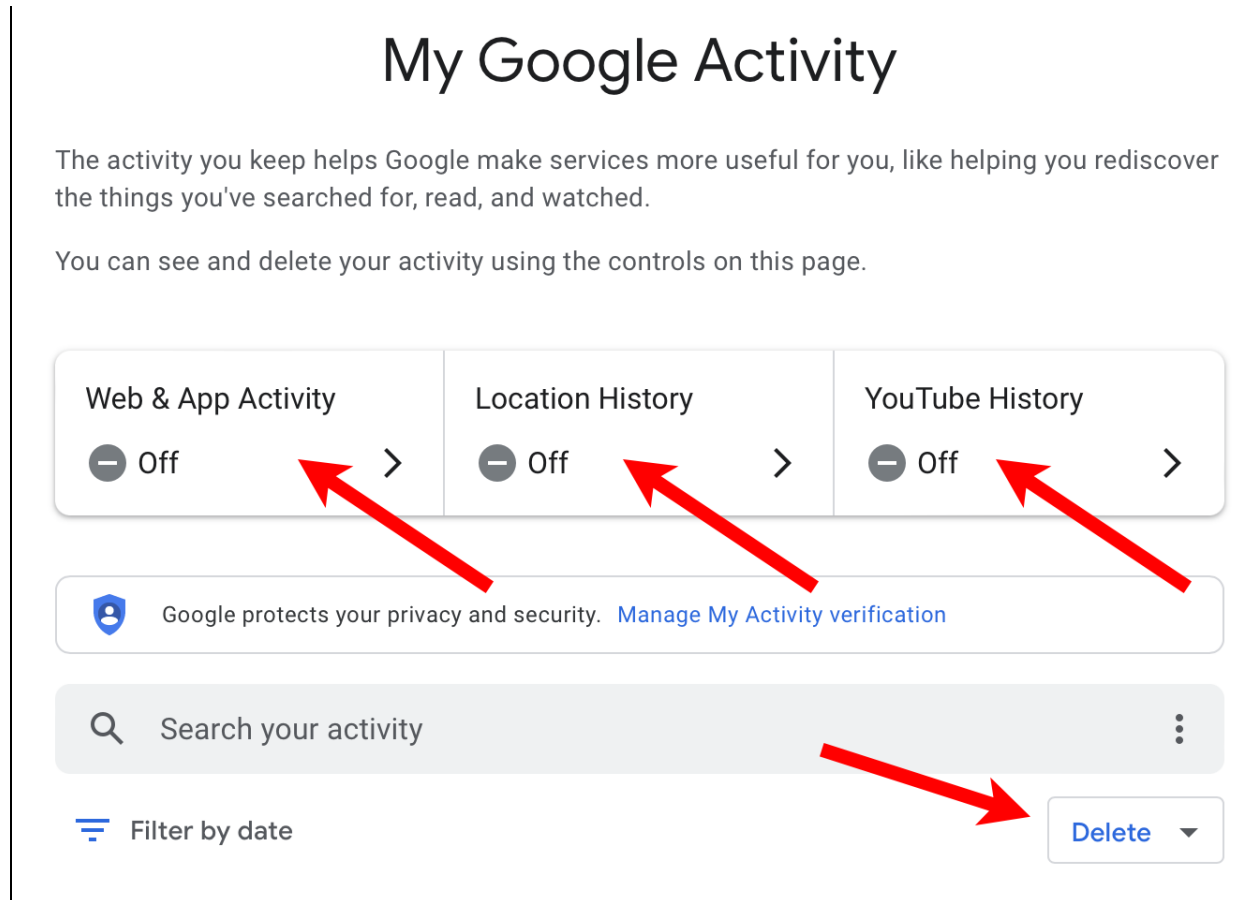
Various companies offer free websites, like Google and Facebook. They make their money not by selling your information but selling you to advertisers. This is done by letting advertisers request to show ads to specific types of people.

Companies like Facebook and Google offer the advertisers precise targeting based on what they can determine about you, e.g. your age, gender, location, buying habits, etc.

If you use Google searching or applications, you can control what they save about you on this webpage:

<https://myactivity.google.com/myactivity>

The page looks something like this:



At the top, you can turn off web and app tracking, location tracking and YouTube history. There is also a Delete button where you can delete the information they have already stored about you and your activities.

As you can see, I have turned off all Google tracking they let me control. I use the DuckDuckGo search engine instead of Google because they do not make their money by tracking users.

If you turn off web and app tracking for Google, the search engine will not remember your search history. This history can be helpful to some people, so be aware that you may want to keep some of these options active.

Conclusion

There is quite a bit of information about you on the Internet. Some of this is to support having your information on your Cloud accounts and is there because you put it there. This is a useful way to store much of your information, like contacts and calendar events. It makes you independent of your specific devices since you can view and update your information in many ways on all of your devices and in many cases on other computers as well.

This is done in a secure way that can be of great benefit to you and make your life much easier. You can store Zoom links for upcoming events on your calendar and just open your calendar and click on the link when you want to attend the meeting. This can be done on any of the Cloud calendar systems and can prove to be much easier than trying to find the email invitations to the events.

This system offers you the ability to “live on the Cloud” and treat all of your devices and “information appliances”. Your information is available whenever you connect to the Internet.

Most of your devices (smartphones, tablets and computers) will keep the latest version of your information so you can view it when you are not connected to the Internet. Any new information will be automatically downloaded to your device when you reconnect to the Internet. Any changes you have made while off-line also be uploaded at that time.

This can make for a very easy and pleasant way to control your schedule and contacts and it is much better than having to be physically sitting in front of a specific device to access it.