



Bluetooth Tracker Safety Guide

What's a Bluetooth Tracker

Manufacturers often insist that Bluetooth trackers are designed solely for locating personal belongings, but in reality, it's very easy for someone to hide one on a person without their knowledge. Because of growing concerns about stalking and unwanted tracking, some Bluetooth trackers now include features that allow non-owners to detect them — either through phone apps or by emitting a sound after a period of time. We'll cover how these detection methods work (and where they fall short) shortly, but first it's important to understand what these devices look like and how they behave.

What It Looks Like When Your Phone Automatically Detects a Tracker

Both Android and iOS devices can automatically detect when an unknown AirTag is travelling with you. "Unknown" means the tracker is registered to someone else's account and is no longer in Bluetooth range of that person's phone.

For example, if you're spending time with a friend who has an AirTag on their keys, you won't receive any alert because the tracker is still connected to their device. But if your friend lends you their keys for the day and you go your separate ways, your phone should eventually notify you that an unknown tracker is moving with you.

It's important to note:

Detection is not immediate.

It can take several hours — and in some cases up to 24 hours — before your phone sends an alert.



Automatic detection currently works only for AirTags without requiring any additional apps.

Both Apple and Google have announced plans to expand automatic detection to other brands.

Other Apple devices using the Find My network can also trigger these alerts.

If You Receive an Unknown Tracker Notification

If you receive an unknown tracker notification, it means your phone has detected a Bluetooth tracker moving with you. Before assuming the worst, remember that these alerts can appear for legitimate reasons — for example, if a friend lent you their keys or bag and it contains an AirTag registered to them.

However, an unknown tracker notification can also indicate that someone has placed a Bluetooth tracker on you or your belongings without your knowledge. That's why it's important to recognise what these alerts look like and understand what steps to take when you receive one.

Once you get a notification, begin checking any place where a small object — roughly the size of a U.S. quarter or a 1-euro coin — could be hidden. This includes:

Pockets

Bag linings

Inside jackets

Under seats



In glove compartments

Attached to or underneath a car

On Android Devices

Any phone running Android 14 or newer can automatically detect unknown AirTags without needing extra apps. To check your version, go to:

Settings → About Phone → Android Version

This feature is enabled by default. To confirm:

Settings → Safety & emergency → Unknown tracker alerts → Allow alerts

Android will notify you if an AirTag appears to be travelling with you.

Other Unknown Tracker Notifications Using AirGuard

If your phone cannot update to Android 14, or you want to detect more than just AirTags, you'll need a third-party app. AirGuard is one of the most reliable options, though it is not perfect and may occasionally take longer to detect a tracker.

Setting Up AirGuard:

Download AirGuard from the Google Play Store.

Open the app and grant the required permissions: Location, Nearby devices, Notifications.



When AirGuard Detects a Tracker:

You'll receive a notification. Tapping it opens a screen showing a map and options.

Tap Detailed Scan and walk around to track signal strength.

Once the signal reaches 90% or higher, you should be very close to the tracker.

On iPhones

Any iPhone running iOS 14.5 or newer automatically detects unknown AirTags. To check your version:

Settings → General → About → iOS Version

To confirm notifications are enabled:

Settings → Notifications → Tracking Notifications → Allow Notifications

When your iPhone detects an unknown AirTag, you'll receive an alert. Tapping it shows a map and timeline. AirTag owners cannot see a movement history — only the current location.

If the AirTag Might Be Legitimate:

Tap Pause Tracking Notifications to stop alerts for that specific AirTag.



If You Don't Know Where the AirTag Is:

Use Play Sound or Find to locate it.

Tap Learn About This AirTag to see the serial number and last four digits of the owner's phone number.

Detecting Other Trackers on iPhone with AirGuard

To detect Tile, Samsung SmartTags, Chipolo, and others, you'll need AirGuard.

Setting Up AirGuard on iPhone:

Download AirGuard from the App Store.

Allow required permissions: Location, Notifications, Bluetooth.

When AirGuard Detects a Tracker:

You'll receive a notification. Tapping it opens a map.

Choose Locate Tracker, Observe Tracker, or Ignore Tracker.

Use signal strength to locate the tracker.

How to Manually Search for a Bluetooth Tracker

Automatic detection is limited and delayed. Manual scanning helps if you suspect a tracker immediately.



Manual Search on Android Devices:

Android 14+: Go to Settings → Safety & emergency → Unknown tracker alerts → Scan now.

Use AirGuard to scan for other trackers and follow signal strength.

Manual Search on iPhones:

Use AirGuard → Manual Scan → Locate Tracker.

Use signal strength to find the device.

What to Do If You Find an Unknown Tracker

Your next steps depend heavily on your safety situation.

1. Prioritise Your Safety:

- If you are in an abusive relationship, disabling the tracker may escalate the situation.
- Contact a domestic violence advocate before taking action.

2. Disabling the Tracker:

- Remove the battery if safe to do so.
- Be aware: disabling the tracker alerts the owner.

3. Gathering Information:

- AirTags provide serial number and last four digits of the owner's phone number.

- Take screenshots of all relevant information.

4. Contacting Law Enforcement:

- If you feel unsafe, contact police or a trusted friend.
- Law enforcement may request info from the manufacturer.