

THE GEEK PROFESSOR®

Reclaim your Online Identity

WHY MANAGE YOUR IDENTITY?

There are serious life consequences when people find what you post. You can't control what they think, but you can control some of the information they use to judge you.

Be particularly cautious with:

- Private thoughts and feelings
- Controversial political or religious topics
- Personal information (yours or others')
- Travel plans, schedule, etc.
- Photo details, backgrounds, and reflections
- Hobbies that might help someone guess passwords or use to bully you.
- Information about addictions, medical problems, or other exploitable weaknesses
- Data about your location and valuables you carry or own.

HUNTING YOUR DATA DOWN

Using Google®:

- Quoted search – Use to search for words together instead of separate:
“jeremy duffy” vs jeremy duffy
- The “minus” operator – type words separated by spaces like normal, but use a minus symbol (without spaces) in front of any word you specifically DON'T want to see.
“jeremy duffy” –lawyer –shanley
- Site search – A quick way to scan specific sites or domains
 - site:.mil - Searches only on military domain sites
 - site:army.mil - Searches only on army military sites
 - site:hood.army.mil - Searches only the Fort Hood army website
- URL search – Look for keywords anywhere in the website address
inurl:forum jeremy duffy – Matches: www.sitename.com/forum/members/201782.html

Other services to try:

- Pipl.com – Search by name, username, or other identifiers. A great way to get a picture of their online activity.
- 123people.com – Very similar to pipl.
- Public records – Only state websites and not 3rd party!
Search for “washington public records” gives:
 - <http://dw.courts.wa.gov/> (**good!**)
 - <http://www.washingtonpublicrecord.com> (Some 3rd party. Avoid.)

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DATA ELIMINATION

Stuff you control

- Delete or replace photos and other submissions
- Remove or sort “friends” into groups. Target access and future postings on those groups
- List profiles you want to get rid of. Change all data possible to fake information and THEN delete the account (poison the well)

Stuff others control (forum posts, comments, reviews, etc)

- Ask nicely
- Lawyer up, but beware the Streisand Effect.

Data brokers

- Use opt-out lists to get out of online databases

Public records

- Make note of unflattering information (short term)
- Support better privacy laws (long term)

OUTSHINE THE NEGATIVES

- Register a domain name with your name in it
- Use search engine optimization to make sure it can be scanned properly by search engines
- Have either very interesting or very relevant information
- Spread your name and content around. Comment on forums and other pages using your name
- Sign up on major websites and create full profiles (but only with information you WANT public)

DO BETTER NEXT TIME

- Talk to your friends and family and teach them to protect their and your information better
- Always assume that information given away will be lost or shared
- Limit the data you provide when creating accounts or using services. Always the minimum necessary.
- Use Google alerts (or similar) to monitor your important data online.
- Before submitting any content to the Internet, ask yourself if you would want this brought up someday when you run for President. If the answer is no, reconsider posting.

*“Fixing” your online identity is less effective than having nothing to clean!
When in doubt, don’t post online!*