

**How to view,
download, and
delete your
personal
information
online from
some of the
biggest data
collectors in
the world.**

YOU MIGHT BE
SURPRISED BY JUST
HOW MUCH THEY
KNOW.



PROTECT
ADVISER 

How to view, download, and delete your personal information online from some of the biggest data collectors in the world. You might be surprised by just how much they know.

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Facebook

When it comes to compiling data about users, there are few who do it more comprehensively than Facebook. In fact, there's so much data about each user that the company splits up the downloads into sections and logs to make viewing it more manageable.

If you follow this Link:

(<https://www.facebook.com/help/930396167085762>)

you'll find links to activity logs that collect various types of Facebook activities into a single stream. So, if you want to see every status update you've ever made, you can do that here.

If you want to download an archive of everything you've ever done on Facebook, you can do that here:

([https://www.facebook.com/settings?tab=your facebook information](https://www.facebook.com/settings?tab=your_facebook_information))

The file will be big—like, multiple gigabytes big.

Once you dig into the Facebook settings on this page:

https://www.facebook.com/your_information/

you can scroll down to the bottom and see things that may surprise you. For instance, Facebook thinks I'm in the "established adult life" stage of my life, whatever that means.

If you click this link:

https://www.facebook.com/location_history/view/

it will show you a map of places you have been. Weird.

Apple

Recently Apple gave U.S. users the ability to download their personal data, which makes sense in light of its CEO's big privacy speech. Apple is primarily a hardware company, so it doesn't rely as heavily on collecting user data to

make money. As a result, you might find that your Apple data is really quite boring.

If you want to check it out, go to the Data and Privacy page and log in:

<https://privacy.apple.com/account>

While you're there, you can also double check some of your privacy settings and make sure you're comfortable with everything going on.

Google

Not to be outdone by Apple, Google has also revamped the way in which users can interact with and download their personal data.

If you go to the My Activity page:

https://myactivity.google.com/myactivity?utm_source=my-account&utm_medium&utm_campaign=my-acct-promo&authuser=1

you will see a running tally of everything you have done using Google products. The sheer volume of entries on that page might be impressive. It likely includes every search you've requested, every time you've used Google Maps, all of the YouTube videos you've watched, and smart home functions you've done via app or a Google Assistant speaker. You can even listen to your Google Assistant voice requests.

If you want to delete this activity, you can do so by going to this page:

https://myactivity.google.com/delete-activity?authuser=1&utm_source=my-account&utm_campaign=my-acct-promo&utm_medium=true

and selecting the dates you want to delete or choose by service. So, if you want to nuke your YouTube history after some questionable binge watching, you can do so.

Before you consider your Google account nice and tidy, you might consider doing one of the Privacy Checkups:

<https://myaccount.google.com/u/1/privacycheckup>

which will run you through your settings and show you what the services are collecting.

Amazon

It's easy enough to see most of the information about your Amazon account through the regular menus on the site or through the app, but you may not know that Amazon keeps audio from your Alexa requests and links them to your account. You can find them by going to the devices page:

<https://www.amazon.com/hz/mycd/myx#/home/devices/1>

and clicking the box under where it says "Actions."

Snapchat

If you're still using Snapchat (or you stopped, but want to know what information the company has about you), you can visit this page:

<https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/a/download-my-data>

and submit a request. It will take a while for the company to "prepare" your data into a zip file (usually a couple hours) and then you get a link from which you can download it.

Some personal data like your device history is located at this page:

<https://accounts.snapchat.com/accounts/login?continue=https%3A%2F%2Faccounts.snapchat.com%2Faccounts%2Fwelcome>

if you want to see it without the download.

Twitter

To grab your Twitter archive, head into the account settings page and navigate to the "Download your data" section. Like with Snapchat, Twitter will gather up your info into a zip file and send you a link for downloading. You'll

need to have a confirmed email address if you want to go through with the process.

Microsoft

Even if you mostly use Macs, Microsoft may still have some information about you if you use any of its services like Xbox, Skype, or that old Hotmail account you forgot about. You can head to Microsoft's privacy hub:

<https://account.microsoft.com/account/privacy>

where you can sign in and download a compilation of all your personal data. If you use a Windows computer, expect to find a bunch of information in there. The hub also directs you to the various privacy settings pages across the Microsoft stable of apps.

Data brokers

While tracking down your info on specific tech and social media sites is relatively straightforward at this point, finding the shadowy information that's tracked, scraped, and extrapolated by data collection companies is much harder to pin down.

Acxiom, for example, is a large "marketing data" company that takes information about people on the web and forms profiles that marketers can use for targeted advertising. If you want to see the data it collects about you, you can create an account at its AboutTheData website.

<https://aboutthedata.com/portal/registration/step1>

Yes, you have to give them your personal information if you want to see what personal information they have about you.

You can also opt out of Acxiom's data collection practices, which will stop them from tracking you further, but won't erase the information that's already there.

Acxiom is just one company of many, though. Motherboard has a massive list of data brokers and links to help you opt out of their tracking:

https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/ne9b3z/how-to-get-off-data-broker-and-people-search-sites-pipl-spokeo

It's a great resource, but it will likely take you a few hours to hit all the links. Some larger agencies will even make you send them a copy of your photo ID to prove your identity due to the sensitive nature of the data.

The big takeaway from all of this data is to keep an eye on your privacy settings when you use apps and sites. It's still a maze of permissions and privacy agreements, but it's actually easier now than it ever has been thanks to reforms like GDPR. Be vigilant.

ProtectAdviser.com