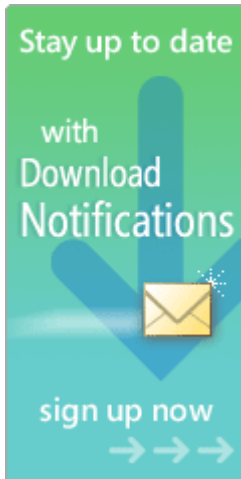


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## How to limit your personal data in online directories

Published: August 30, 2005



Internet phone books, people-finding services, and other online directories make it almost impossible to keep your personal contact information entirely off the Web.

It's fairly easy for anyone nowadays to find your name, phone number, home address, or e-mail address—for business or social purposes, advertising or marketing, or even criminal intent.

Here are a few ways to help control the amount of personal information you give to the world.

**Before you post any information online:**

- **Be choosy.** From the start, limit the amount of personal information you give to a site. Only share your primary e-mail address with people you know, and avoid listing any information in large Internet directories.
- **When you shop online, know your sources.** Vendors who sell deeply discounted electronics tend to be different than those who sell knitting supplies, for example.

Limit your purchases of expensive, popular items to prominent companies with clear privacy policies. Find out what others say about the sellers and selling sites by reviewing seller and buyer feedback and checking out comparison sites such as Epinions.com or Bizrate.com.

- **Read the Web site's privacy statement carefully.** This statement should tell you how and why a business is collecting your information. If something doesn't sound right to you, contact the company with questions before you divulge any personal information.

If the site doesn't post a privacy policy, take your business elsewhere.

- **Post your resume only on prominent job sites.** Be sure that any Internet job sites you use have privacy policies that only allow verified recruiters to scan your information.

Don't post your resume on your own Web site.

- **Avoid participating in sweepstakes** or other such marketing-driven events, both online and offline.

**Get off the lists (and stay off)**

- 

**Find out where you are currently listed** by doing your own online research. Search for your name in the popular search engines and in online directories, such as the ones listed in the

**Related Links**

- [Phishing Filter: Help protect yourself from online scams](#)
- [Protect your privacy with online payment services](#)
- [5 safety tips for using a public computer](#)

**Popular online directories**

- [Anywho.com](#)
- [Switchboard.com](#)
- [Whitepages.com](#)
- [Phonenumber.com](#)
- [Smartpages.com](#)
- [InfoSpace.com](#)
- [Yahoo! People Search](#)
- [411.com](#)
- [Superpages.com](#)
- [DexOnline.com](#)
- [USSearch.com](#)
- [Intelius.com](#)

sidebar on the right of your screen.

- **Request that your name be removed from online directories.**  
If it's not clear how to do this on a Web site, use the "Contact Us" link or address at the bottom of the directory site.
- **Get an unlisted phone number** or at least have your address unlisted. Also, instruct your phone and Internet service providers to remove any existing personal information of yours from all of their directories.
- **Set up a special e-mail address** solely for online activities such as shopping and newsgroups. This way you can close it if needed and start a new one without disrupting your business or personal e-mail correspondence.
- **Keep a record** any time you give your personal information to a company so you can ask them to remove it later if necessary.

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