

Disclaimer: This Workbook was created to document the process I went through to remove our PII from the internet and I share this to make it easier for other families. This document is a compilation of all the sheets in the Excel workbook. Some lists are repetitive in this .PDF.

I am not an authority on personal privacy and this is not legal advice. If you have legal issues related to privacy, please contact a qualified attorney.

I am not paid to use or recommend any strategies or products in this document or through my website. I don't endorse anything but privacy on my website. My website will contain more up-to-date information than this document. Please check it for more specific tips.

PRESERVING YOUR PRIVACY--- A Guide for Military Families

WHY WORRY ABOUT YOUR PRIVACY?

- Specific threats to military members and families in the media
- Identity theft for adults and children following data breaches
- Desire to stay out of the media spotlight
- A personal right in the US, guaranteed by the Constitution

[WHY PRIVACY MATTERS: GLENN GREENWALD'S TED TALK @ YOUTUBE](#)



WHERE DOES ONLINE PERSONALLY IDENTIFYING INFORMATION (PII) COME FROM?

- ❖ You disclose it voluntarily:
 - Search engines, browsers, and apps track histories
 - Social media websites and apps that access contact lists and share files
 - Shopping discount cards, coupon sites, online shopping sell personal information
 - Magazine subscriptions, junk mail, charities, colleges share mailing lists
 - Email marketers sell email addresses and contact lists
 - News stories, obituaries, school graduations, sports events, etc...
- ❖ Public information breached or released legally
 - Voter registrations, vehicle registrations, professional licenses, promotion lists
 - Property transactions, divorce records, traffic violations, accident reports
 - Phone directories, company data breaches, dark web sharing
 - Public information widely distributed on websites for general information

WHAT PII DO I MOST WANT REMOVED FROM ONLINE?

- ✓ Children's names
- ✓ Phone numbers
- ✓ Email addresses
- ✓ Dates of birth
- ✓ Past and current physical addresses
- ✓ Profile usernames
- ✓ Names of other relatives

TIPS FOR BEGINNING THE PROCESS

- Create new email account(s) to use for this process (Protonmail, Hotmail, or Outlook)
- Install Mozilla Firefox browser on your computer/tablet and enhance privacy settings
- Install a snipping tool for capturing parts of web searches to save instead of screenshots
- Create a folder or use a separate thumb drive to save screen clips, docs, and your redacted IDs
- Create a redacted copy of an IDs with your first and last name. Scan or photograph it, then mark out your facial features, correct address, DOB, and other PII. All they need is the type of ID and your name.
- Use a spreadsheet or notebook to track your progress



INITIAL SEARCHES FOR FAMILY MEMBER NAMES

- Type names in quotes. Also search for your email addresses.
- Use Google, Bing, Yahoo, DuckDuckGo (minimum)
- Use a snipping tool to save results for each page
- Don't follow any links at first.
- Be sure to look at Images, Videos, etc...
- Angry yet?

HOW TO TELL WHERE THE PII CAME FROM

- Notice where the information is from: do you see info/images from social media accounts, news stories, locations, work information?
- Review all social media privacy settings and make them as private as possible. Consider using false/misleading names and information for anything that is public.
- Locate your state's Privacy Policy for voter and vehicle registration and personal licensing. Do they allow exemptions to releasing PII? If so, request it following their policies.

START WITH THE SEARCH RESULTS

- Using the spreadsheet information for specific sites, begin opting out FIRST for the sites that show PII in the **search result** description. Document what you do for each website and record the date in the spreadsheet.
- The major websites should be the next priority. (Smaller sites scrape their data.) They include Acxiom, BeenVerified, Infotracer, Intelius, PeopleFinders, PeopleSmart, Spokeo, TruePeopleSearch, and WhitePages and probably showed up on the first pages of your searches. See the hierarchical listing in the Workbook on the yellow tab.
- For now, ignore any site in the spreadsheet that doesn't show up in search results. Your first goal is to clear up the search results.

REMEMBER AS YOU WORK

- Companies make this process as tedious as possible to discourage you from opting out of their website. Don't give up. Use their online instructions, then email, and finally call them when necessary.
- Search periodically for new information. New companies are created daily to violate your personal privacy.
- If you find your information on a site not listed in the spreadsheet and you can't locate a way to opt out, search whois.com for the owner of the website/domain. Sometimes you can find information about contacting the owner directly.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE THE NEXT PCS

- Use a Post Office Box for your forwarding address.
- PO boxes can be reserved online before you arrive at your new destination.
- Update your address (online, phone, or written) with companies you do business with right before moving.
- Use false names or initials for magazine subscriptions and catalogs. My cat loves catalogs.
- Have an email account designated for shopping cards. Use false names for these. Don't attach them to your cell phone numbers or use their apps.
- What is your new state's policy regarding releasing public information?
- What is the policy of your home of record? Contact them, if necessary.
- Complete any exemption paperwork when you register for anything in the state, when possible.
- Ask companies about their privacy policies about your PII before signing up. Ask to opt-out up front before giving them any information or doing business with them.
- Always give them as little information as possible.
- Consider having a land line so you don't have to give out your cell phone numbers. MySudo is also good for creating phone numbers that are disposable.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK TO ORGANIZE YOUR PROGRESS

Do THIS!	Website	Started/Completed
[Action]	[URL]	[Date]
Know your state's public information policy for voter registration	Links to State websites	
Know your state's public information policy for vehicle registration.	Links to State websites	
Register all phones in the Do Not Call list	National registration	

Create a new email account to use when contacting companies for opting out. Don't use PII in the name.	Use Protonmail, Hotmail, or Outlook
Use a unique email address (no PII) for commercial promotions and shopping	Use Protonmail, Hotmail, or Outlook
Search your names, AKAs, usernames, and email addresses using all search engines.	Google, Bing, Yahoo, DuckDuckGo Repeat every 3 months
Check phone and computer app permissions for sharing policies.	FTC privacy article
Subscribe to magazines and catalogs using alternate IDs	
Use a PO or UPS box for mail deliveries	USPS POBox link UPS Store
In newspaper articles and obituaries, don't list locations and/or full names.	
When opening accounts, ask about privacy policy and opt-out of their release	FTC business privacy policy info

Checklist	START DATE	COMPLETED
1. Read the instructions and create email addresses. Complete the first online searches.		
2. Open and rename the Individual Removal file and share the template with anyone who cares about their privacy.		
3. Develop a strategy for which sites to remove first.		
4. Recheck the privacy settings on all your social media accounts.		
5. Install Mozilla Firefox and a snipping tool for your computer/tablet.		
6. Make a folder or thumbdrive for all your snipped files and other documents.		
7. Set up and verify a new email account for all the email verifications and contacts you'll be making.		
8. Start the initial searches and save your results. This is your baseline for comparison.		
9. Using the correct person's .pdf file, document your Opt Out activity.		
10. Decide if you want to work on a single person's profiles first, or both adults, or all profiles at the same time for each website.		
11. If you find new websites, insert a row in the spreadsheet for the individual and for the general list document.		

12. Record the names of any employees you speak to if you have to phone the companies.

13. Verify removal requests via email and save email documentation.

14. Some websites ask for a phone number to call with a code. If possible, use a landline or MySudo phone number.

15. When possible, snip the search results, including the URL and email to the company when you request a profile's removal. (Not the entire screen)

16. If you're still coherent after cleaning up your search results, search the other websites for your family's names and follow their Opt Out procedures.

17. Be sure to check for state-specific sites in the list of databroker sites .pdf. These aren't included in the main lists.

18. Keep your file updated with results. File BBB complaints when you have problems with companies.

[BBB Complaint Link](#)

****When contacting the companies, I ALWAYS used safety/security as reason for removal of information. It's helpful to state in your request that the site violates COPPA (Childrens Online Privacy Protection Act) by revealing the location of a child under 13 years old. Anyone can use this, whether or not you have children at home.****

Keep a paper trail and list who you speak to if you phone a company and use names to file a BBB complaint.

Refresh your browser each time you search. If the results show a small down arrow next to the URL listed, the page is Cached. You can request that this be removed if the page has been updated. Links and info are on the Red tab.

Complete the personal information Opt Out paperwork for your state, if possible.
(Voter, vehicle registration, etc...)

Opt out of the first websites you see in your searches. Many smaller sites use them as their sources.

Search every few months using all the search engines. New websites pop up all the time.

If you search a specific website, don't limit the location on the first search. You may have results in several locations. Check results for multiple listings, with middle initials/names, maiden names, etc...

Companies purposely make this process tedious. Keep searching, emailing, and calling if necessary. They'll usually remove it if you insist.

They change their names, URLs, privacy policies, and contact information for their domain/website to make opting-out more difficult.

Use whois.com to search for the owner of the domain if you're unable to locate contact information on the website.

For new websites, look for Privacy Policy statements, FAQs, or Profile Removal links for Opt Out links and instructions..

Save all email confirmations of profile Opt Out procedures. Check your Spam/Junk folders for messages from these companies

Refresh your browser after each search. You may need to use different browsers (Firefox, Edge, Internet Explorer, etc..) because some websites are optimized in different browsers.

Once websites remove your profiles, search engines may need to remove the cached pages. Google & Bing will do this by request. Yahoo search has no way to request removal of cached information or pages. They recrawl pages every 6-8 weeks.

[Remove cached pages from Google. You must have a Google account.](#)

[Remove cached pages from Bing. You must have a Microsoft account.](#)

Companies will try to entice you to pay for their services.

You don't have to pay to remove your information. They'll send you scary emails about your information being stolen as a sales pitch.

Add new websites to this page and to each family member's sheet to document your procedures.

Search for state-specific sites for databases and directories. Most of them are listed in the List of Databroker websites .pdf.

Where possible, I created the links to allow Secure Browsing (https://). Many sites didn't allow this, unfortunately and gave security alerts. Make sure your antivirus/antispam software is updated,

If you have to submit papers, copies of IDs by mail, redact your photo, DOB, address and other information.

SOURCE	LINK	DATE
Business Insider	Tech Insider	1/14/2017
Identity Force	Data Breaches	
Tor Browser	Download link	
Microsoft Training	Help with Excel	
CBS News	Online Privacy Worries	1/28/2016
National Cyber Security Alliance	StaySafeOnline	
NBC News	Military Spouses Targeted	2/10/2015
FoxNews	ISIS Threat to Mil Families	10/2/2014
Military.com	Threat to Families	10/7/2014
Army.mil	Online Scams	11/2/2012
Washington Post	DoD Data Breach	7/9/2015