Supporting a positive security culture

MANAGING YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT
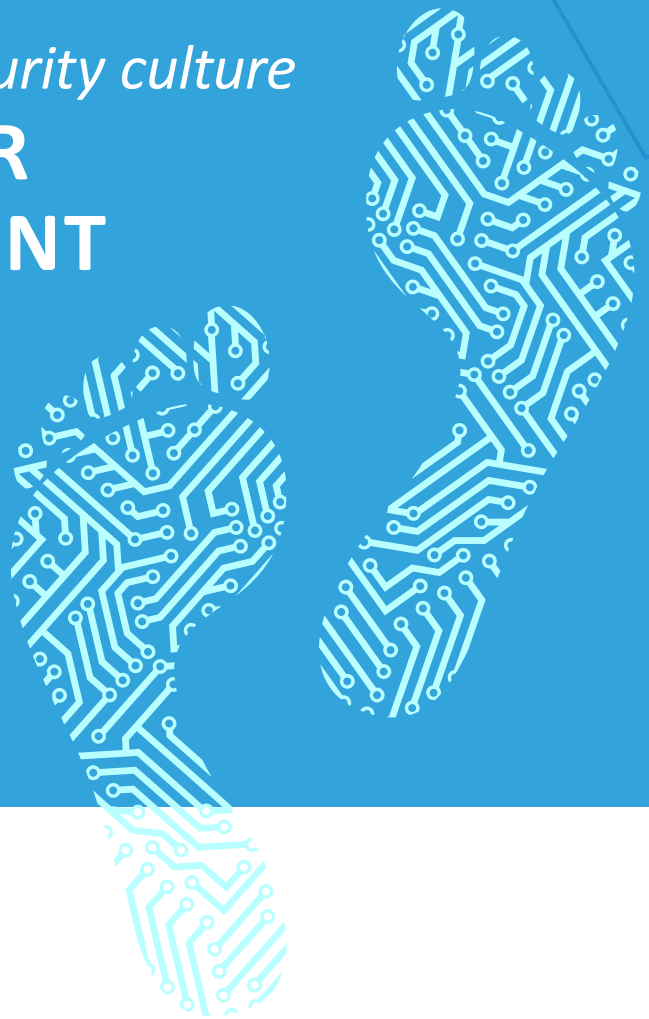
Fact sheet

*This document provides general guidance in relation to how to manage
your digital footprint and is not intended to be comprehensive.*

What is your digital footprint?

A digital footprint is a trail of information that you leave behind when using the internet and digital devices. For example, when you are using your mobile phone or other devices to browse websites, transact online, post or share information. You may not even be aware that you are leaving a digital footprint and your information is publicly available.[1]

Examples of online activity that can add to your digital footprint include:

- Browsing the Internet
- Using social media
- Participating in professional networks and forums
- Managing online accounts
- Completing online forms
- Online credit/debit card payments
- Sending and receiving emails

- Use of mobile apps
- Sharing your location, for example with digital maps
- Dating forums and sites
- Gaming and entertainment
- Smart home devices
- Online sharing of images
- Telephony using VOIP (voice over internet protocol)

Take care not to overshare

Once you share information online, it can be there forever unless you are aware and actively manage your digital footprint. If you don't manage your digital footprint, you could lose control of your information and it may end up being used in ways that could potentially harm you, your family or your employer.

A digital footprint is made up of information that you actively share (for example, when posting or sharing content using social media), together with information that is captured passively when you are online (for example, details that are collected in the background when you search online or visit websites). In some cases, you may be unaware that your data is being collected.

Taking control of your digital footprint today will help you to safely make use of the internet and the services it offers.

Learn how to manage your digital footprint

It is important you can identify your own digital footprint so you can actively manage it. Here are some ways to find out what your online presence looks like:

✓ **Identify your digital footprint** – search for your information to see what is publicly available and what is available to restricted groups. Using an internet browser, type in your name or email address and see what the search returns, also view images to see what is returned. Refer to the following page for further information about what to search for.

✓ **Review and update your information** – make sure that any personal and work related information returned is suitable. Review your information and update or delete the content you are not happy with. In some cases, you may need to contact the site administrator and ask them to remove or edit the content.

✓ **Think before you click 'post'** – before you share personal and work information online, take time to think about the consequences. Ask yourself whether it is necessary to share this information and consider whether it could potentially harm yourself or others in the future?

✓ **Review privacy settings** on your devices, apps and online accounts to ensure you are aware of what data is being collected. Implement app tracking transparency on your iOS devices.[2]

✓ **Check configuration settings** on your devices and review which apps have access to information such as your photos, location, calendar and contacts.

✓ **Use unique strong passwords** for each of your devices, apps and online accounts, including your social media accounts. Where offered, consider using multi-factor authentication to add further protection to your online information.

✓ **Clean up your browsing history** – when you have finished viewing or entering content on the web ensure you delete your browsing history and close all browser windows. Where available, turn on the option to automatically clear your browsing history when you exit your browser.

✓ **Set expectations** – remember that others, including family, friends and professional organisations, can also post and share content about you online. Have a discussion to make it clear what you expect from others when it comes to your online digital footprint.

✓ **Plan for the future** – consider what could happen to your digital presence should you become incapacitated. You may like to have a discussion with your family or trusted friends regarding what you would like to occur with your online presence, just as you would with other future estate planning matters. Make it easy for your family by ensuring you have a documented list of your digital assets and online accounts.[3]

✓ **Review regularly** – looking after your online digital footprint is an ongoing job. Make it a habit to review your online profile regularly, including checking your privacy settings, as online providers often update or change settings, and amend their terms and conditions of use.

Safely searching for your digital footprint

The following checklist[1] provides guidance to help to monitor your digital footprint safely, by searching for yourself online:

Identify	Search criteria	How to do this
General information about you	• First name and surname • First name, middle initial and surname • Email address • Email address and location	Enter search criteria into your preferred internet browser and view the results
Images related to you	• First name and surname • First name, middle initial and surname	Either use a dedicated image search* or type 'images' into your preferred internet browser followed by your search criteria *Some internet browsers provide a dedicated image search (for example www.google.com/images)
Social media information about you	• First name and surname • First name, middle initial and surname • The name of group(s) that you belong to	Either use a dedicated 'groups' search* or type relevant group names into your preferred internet browser followed by your search criteria *Some internet browsers provide a dedicated 'groups' search (for example www.google.com/groups)
Blog entries related to you	• First name and surname • First name, middle initial and surname	Type 'blog' into your preferred internet browser followed by your search criteria

Tips for safe searching

Here are some tips to help you search for your digital footprint safely:

• Always search the internet from a safe location, such as your home, and with a computer you are authorised to use. Avoid using public Wi-Fi to enter personal information online as it is not secure and will put your private information at risk.

• If you have a more commonly occurring name (such as John Smith, for example), you might find that the search engines return a lot of information, which may not be about you. This means you are less likely to be found by your name alone, and that's good!

• Once you finish your search, clear your browsing history and close all browser windows.

Further information

Visit the Australian Digital Health Agency's website for additional cyber security guidance materials for consumers and for healthcare providers.

Free security awareness training is also available at training.digitalhealth.gov.au

To find out more about how you can protect information that you access online, visit www.cyber.gov.au.

You can also choose to receive free updates about the latest information security risks.

Subscribe at:

* www.cyber.gov.au

* www.scamwatch.gov.au.

References

1   CPNI, My Digital Footprint. Available from:
    https://www.cpni.gov.uk/system/files/documents/59/06/10_Tracking my digital footprint_FINAL.pdf

2   Techradar, What is app tracking transparency on iPhone? iOS 14.5's privacy update explained. Available from:
    https://www.techradar.com/au/news/what-is-app-tracking-transparency-on-iphone-ios-145s-big-update-explained

3   SANS, OUCH! Digital Inheritance. Available from:
    https://www.sans.org/security-awareness-training/resources/digital-inheritance

Contact for enquiries

Acknowledgements