


Your digital footprint

Every time you go online you leave a trail. This is just like a real footprint. It reveals where you've been, how long you stayed and what you've been doing there. Every time you register for an online service, send an email, download a video or upload a photo, the information can be accessed and your digital footprint can be revealed. This shouldn't necessarily be worrying but it is advisable to be aware of your digital footprint and to be cautious and sensible when you are online.




Six top tips for taking care of your digital footprint


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1 Don't forget to log off when you leave a website, especially if you are using a shared computer. If you don't, someone can easily pretend to be you!
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2 Don't tell anyone your passwords and don't write them down in an obvious place. Make them more complex by using a combination of letters, numbers and punctuation marks.
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3 Tell an adult if you come across anything online that makes you upset, anxious or concerned. There are ways to report inappropriate or abusive content and in most cases web managers respond rapidly.
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4 Remember your favourite websites by using the history button and the bookmark function on your computer or mobile device. This is a way that your digital footprint can work in your favour, but remember to clear your browser history regularly.
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5 If you want to post comments online, you don't have to use your own name. Invent a nickname to use instead. You can also use a picture instead of a real photo.
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6 Protect your identity online. Be careful about who you share personal information with and always think twice before sharing details like your email, home address, school or phone number with someone.

Think about the future

All kinds of people are interested in your digital footprint. It's now quite common for colleges, universities and employers to check out the online profiles of possible candidates as part of their application process. There are cases of people having missed out on jobs and places in college because their digital footprint didn't impress the recruiters. So, remember: keep safe, don't put too much personal information online and always think carefully before you post something. Ask yourself, 'Would I be happy for absolutely everyone to see this?'