We all have a digital footprint.

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Why is your digital footprint so important?

Every time you visit a website, send or receive an email or submit information to an online service, you add to an online trail known as your digital footprint. The same goes for joining a video call, downloading a film, playing an online game, using a mapping app or instructing a smart speaker. Even when you log into your social media accounts without posting, liking or commenting, you add to your digital footprint.

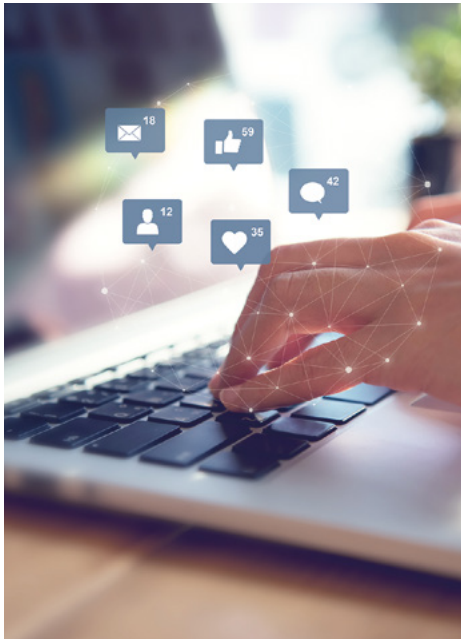
Inevitably, this will have an impact on your life. To what extent is up to you.

Do you ever wonder how products or interests you've searched for, start appearing in your Facebook ads? It's because of your digital footprint. Your online history potentially be seen by other people, or tracked and held in a database, or multiple databases. Other potential consequences include:

- You, family members or friends falling victim to fraud or identity theft.
- Posting about your children putting their online or physical safety at risk.
- Companies targeting you with specific marketing content on websites or via email, phone call or direct mail.
- Advertisers tracking your movement from site to site or page to page to gauge your areas of interest.
- Entertainment providers targeting you with unwanted suggestions for content.
- Prospective employers looking into your and family members' backgrounds.
- Your child's application for schools, colleges, universities, scholarships, clubs or even sports teams being rejected.
- Records of your online activity falling into the wrong hands, including perpetrators of organised crime.
- Tech companies such as browser and search engine providers tracking and recording what you've searched and viewed, and who you've interacted with. This, in turn, could be shared with other parties including law enforcement agencies.
- Being refused life, medical, property or vehicle insurance based on information you have shared online.

What to do

- Don't overshare information about yourself, family members or friends that would be better kept private. That's on social media, on websites and apps requesting details and in response to texts and messages.
- Think before you post. Even if your social media privacy settings are set up correctly, there's no guarantee that your posts or photos won't be shared, with a variety of consequences.
- Be aware that every time you visit a website, it's visible to tech companies like website owners, browsers and search engines.
- Read terms and conditions and data privacy policies on websites and apps before providing any personal data or making transactions. If you're not comfortable with the information being requested, don't provide it.
- Check geolocation settings on mobile devices, apps and cameras. If you don't want anybody to know where you are, or where you have been, disable them.



Never stop enjoying the many excellent benefits of using the internet, but always bear in mind what digital trail you're leaving, who may be able to access it and how they may be able to use it. Consider how your digital footprint could affect you and others, now and into the future.

For comprehensive, practical, expert advice visit **www.getsafeonline.org**

Get Safe Online

Get Safe Online is the UK's leading source of information and advice on online safety and security, for the public and small businesses. It is a not-for-profit, public/private sector partnership backed by law enforcement agencies and leading organisations in internet security, banking and retail.

For more information and expert, easy-to-follow, impartial advice on safeguarding yourself, your family, finances, devices and workplace, visit **www.getsafeonline.org**

If you think you've been a victim of online fraud, report it to Action Fraud, the UK's national fraud and cybercrime reporting centre on 0300 123 20 40 or at www.actionfraud.police.uk

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