

Digital Footprint Zero

How to Find, Reduce, and Erase Your Online Presence — For Good

YOUR DATA. YOUR RULES. YOUR PRIVACY.

20+

Data Brokers Covered

50+

Opt-Out Links Inside

4

Action Checklists

10+

Diagrams & Tables

About This Book

Every day, hundreds of companies you have never heard of are collecting, packaging, and selling detailed profiles about you. **Digital Footprint Zero** is your complete guide to finding them, stopping them, and taking back control of your digital life.

This book walks you through five phases: understanding your footprint, erasing the past, locking down the present, protecting the future, and maintaining your privacy long-term. Every chapter ends with clear action items so you always know your next move.

What You Will Get in the Full Book

- 22 chapters + 5 appendices covering every aspect of digital privacy
- Opt-out links for 20+ data broker sites with step-by-step walkthrough
- Honest comparison of paid removal services: DeleteMe, Incogni, Canary
- Browser config guide: cookies, settings, and extensions per browser
- VPN essentials and privacy browser stack
- Email alias system setup with SimpleLogin and Addy.io
- Phone privacy: permissions, ad ID, SIM swapping, iOS vs Android
- Smart home and IoT privacy guide
- Privacy for families and shared households
- The 10 biggest privacy myths debunked
- One-time cleanup checklist + ongoing maintenance schedule
- Master privacy tool reference with 50+ verified 2026 links

How to Use This Book

This book is organized in five parts that build on each other — but you do not have to read it in order. Use the Threat Model Self-Assessment in the Introduction to figure out which parts are most urgent for your situation, then dive in.

Look for these elements throughout:

- **Info Boxes** — Key facts and context you need to understand the topic
- **Tip Boxes** — Actionable insights you can implement immediately
- **Warning Boxes** — Common mistakes and serious risks to avoid
- **URL Rows** — Every tool and resource formatted for easy reference with clickable links
- **Chapter Action Items** — Your to-do list at the end of every chapter
- **Diagrams** — Visual explanations of how data flows and how tracking works
- **Appendices** — Master checklists and every link in one place

A Note on Links

All links in this book were verified as active and relevant in 2026. The privacy landscape changes quickly — if a tool has changed, search for its name to find the current version. Appendix B is your master tool reference.

Introduction: Your Data Has a Price — and You Are Not Getting Paid

In 2026, your personal information is one of the most valuable commodities on earth. Data brokers alone generate over \$250 billion annually by collecting, packaging, and selling detailed profiles on billions of people. Your name, home address, phone number, email, relatives names, estimated income, political affiliation, and browsing behavior are all on the market — right now.

The uncomfortable truth is that most of this is legal. There are no laws in most US states that prevent a company from aggregating your public records, social media activity, and purchase history into a profile and selling it to the highest bidder. The opt-out mechanisms that do exist are intentionally difficult to find and use.

The Good News

You have more power than you think. The tools and techniques in this book are legal, accessible, and effective. You do not need to be a tech expert. You do not need to go off the grid. You just need the right knowledge, the right tools, and a plan — and this book is that plan.

This book is your counter-offensive. By the time you finish it, you will have removed yourself from the most invasive data broker sites, locked down your digital accounts, equipped yourself with privacy tools that actually work, and built habits that prevent future exposure.

Chapter 1

What a Digital Footprint Really Is

Active vs. Passive Data

Most people think of their digital footprint as the things they deliberately post online — a tweet, a Facebook photo, an Amazon review. That is the active footprint. But the passive footprint is far larger, far more detailed, and almost entirely invisible to the person it describes.

Your passive footprint is built from data you generate simply by existing in the modern world: the websites you visit, the apps on your phone, your purchases, your public records, and even the physical world through loyalty cards, license plate readers, and facial recognition.

Active vs. Passive Footprint

Active: Posts, comments, reviews, profile information you intentionally share.

Passive: Browsing history, location data, app usage, purchases, public records — collected without your direct involvement. This is the data that builds your broker profile.

Data Type	Source	Who Has It
Name, address, phone	Public records, forms	Data brokers, everyone
Browsing history	Cookies, pixels, ISP	Ad networks, ISPs, brokers
Location history	Phone GPS, apps, Wi-Fi	Google, Apple, app makers
Purchase history	Credit cards, loyalty cards	Banks, retailers, brokers
Social connections	Social media, contacts	Meta, Google, brokers

Chapter 2

Who Is Collecting It and Why

The ecosystem behind your data

Data collection is not a single industry — it is an ecosystem of dozens of overlapping players, each capturing a different slice of your life and selling it to the others.

Data Brokers are companies whose entire business model is collecting, aggregating, and selling personal information. There are over 4,000 data brokers operating in the US. The largest — Acxiom, LexisNexis, Experian — have profiles on virtually every American adult.

Ad Networks such as Google Ads and Meta Audience Network track you across the web using cookies and pixels. When you visit a website with a Google Analytics tag, Google records that visit and ties it to your profile.

Apps are perhaps the biggest collectors. Most free apps monetize through advertising, meaning they share your data with ad networks. Many apps contain third-party SDKs from companies like Facebook and Google that harvest data independently of the app itself.

Why Free Services Cost More Than You Think

When a product is free, you are the product. The surveillance advertising model funds most of the internet — which means the business incentive of most apps and websites is to collect as much data about you as possible and sell access to your attention and behavior.

A Preview of What Comes Next

The full book continues with 20 more chapters across five parts. Here is a taste of what is inside:

Part 2 — Erase the Past

The data broker opt-out walkthrough covers 20+ sites including Spokeo, Whitepages, BeenVerified, Acxiom, and LexisNexis — with direct links and step-by-step instructions for each. You will also find an honest comparison of paid removal services like DeleteMe and Incogni, a guide to closing old accounts, and a frank discussion of what cannot be removed.

Part 3 — Lock Down the Present

Learn how to audit your social media by data type (location, photos, connected apps, search visibility), take back control of your Google account, set up email aliases so breaches never expose your real address, and understand why your phone is the biggest privacy leak you own.

Part 4 — Protect the Future

A full browser configuration guide (Brave, Firefox, Chrome, Safari) walks you through disabling third-party cookies, enabling tracker blocking, and the best privacy extensions. Chapters on VPNs, private search engines, password managers, and the alias identity system give you a complete protection stack.

Ready to Take Back Control?

The full book includes every tool, link, checklist, and diagram you need to go from exposed to protected. Every resource has been verified for 2026.

YOU HAVE SEEN THE PREVIEW

Get the Complete Guide

Everything you need to reclaim your privacy — in one book.

22 chapters + 5 appendices

20+ data broker opt-out links, step by step

Browser config guide: cookies, settings, extensions

VPN, alias system, and password manager setup

Phone privacy deep dive — permissions, ad ID, SIM swap

Privacy for families and shared households

One-time cleanup checklist + ongoing maintenance schedule

Master tool reference: 50+ verified 2026 links

Get the Full Book at plainatlas.com

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