

Delete Yourself

# Delete Yourself

*How to Disappear from Society and the Internet  
without a Trace*

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# Delete Yourself

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## Introduction

What if you could hit the reset button on your life? That might seem like an extreme thing to do, but in some circumstances it might also be the best way to reclaim your life. In fact, it could even save your life. When that's the case, the best thing to do is to make it as difficult as possible for anybody to find you – to make it appear as if you never existed. In other words, the answer is to delete yourself.



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## Why Would You Want to Delete Yourself?

The choice to delete yourself is not a decision to be made lightly. There are many things that you can and should try prior to attempting it. However, it is undeniable that for some people, disappearing as completely as possible is the only way to survive.

When someone chooses to disappear, the reasons are personal and often, life-threatening. For example:

- They might wish to get away from creditors and bill collectors.
- They might wish to avoid potential claimants or plaintiffs in a legal matter.
- They might wish to escape some kind of legal action (note: it is important to know the ramifications of running from the law, and that topic will be covered later in the book.)
- They might wish to escape an abusive or controlling spouse or partner.
- They might wish to escape an abusive or neglectful parent or family member.
- They might feel that their life is at risk for some other reason, such as being harassed by a stalker.
- They might simply want to push the reset button on their life.

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If one of these reasons applies to you, then you may want to consider deleting yourself. However, if you do, you must be aware that there are some serious ramifications to consider.

### **What Are the Ramifications of Deleting Yourself from Society?**

It is not an easy thing to delete yourself from society. In fact, it is very easy to underestimate the ramifications of doing so. While the thought of vanishing might be extremely alluring, it is essential to have a thorough understanding of what it means to disappear – and what the potential results of taking such a decisive action might be.

The main thing to consider is the emotional impact that disappearing will have on you. If you want to delete yourself and ensure that you are never found, it means that you will have to cut yourself off from everybody who knows you. If you cannot cope with the idea of never seeing your parents, family, or friends again, then perhaps it is best to seek out a solution that is less extreme than deletion.

Here are some other potential ramifications to keep in mind:

- You may feel extreme guilt about having lied to the people who care about you. The only way to disappear is to lie. You will have to do a great deal of preparation prior to your experience, and doing it will necessitate being untruthful. For example, you will have to delete your social media profiles. You may need to tell people that you have

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chosen to take a break from the internet and its distractions or make up some other story to explain what you are doing.

- It is probable that you will also feel loneliness and even grief for the loss of your former life. Disappearing is not dissimilar to having everybody in your family die at once. If you want to delete yourself, you need to be resigned to the fact that you can never contact anybody from your life again. That's a big loss to accept, and difficult to grasp until you have taken the actions to make it a reality.



- You might be familiar with the saying, “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” In order to disappear from your current life, you must be willing to take on a new existence that will require you to be vigilant at



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all times. If you let your guard down, you are likely to be found out. Hitting the reset button will require you to leave behind your old habits, hobbies, and preferences.

- There might be legal ramifications associated with your disappearance. If you are running from the law or from other obligations, the possibility exists that running will make your situation worse instead of better. You must understand the potential ways that disappearing could backfire on you if you want to vanish.
- You might not be able to undo your disappearance in the event that you change your mind. The people in your life will have to find their own ways to cope with losing you. If you decide to try to return to your current life, you may find that the people who knew you are angry or even unwilling to allow you back into their lives.

It is essential that you understand these ramifications prior to making the decision to delete yourself from society.

### **If You Are Running from Something or Somebody**

One of the most common reasons that people want to delete themselves is that they are running from something – such as a lawsuit or financial obligation – or somebody. If that's the case, then it is extremely important to give serious thought to the resources and effort that may be put into finding you after you disappear.

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If you are running from a family member who has relatively limited resources, it may be sufficient simply to delete all traces of yourself and create a new identity. However, if you are running from someone who has the resources and ability to track you down, you have to be aware of the many things they may use to try to find you. A law enforcement agency such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), or a government agency such as the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will have highly trained and relentless employees who have no personal investment in your situation and may be willing to go to great lengths to follow your trail and find you. What that means is that if you choose to delete yourself, you must be thorough. You cannot leave any bread crumbs behind you. You have to disappear without a trace, and be prepared to leave everything that might identify you behind. You must also be prepared to do everything you can to make it difficult for people to track you down.



What are the things that could potentially be used to find you? Here is a list of things that they might look at.

- Your online profiles and information are the single most important thing that can be used to track you down. A good portion of this book will be dedicated to teaching you how to erase your online presence so it can't be used against you.

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- Your computer hard drive and internet search history contain a great deal of information about you that could be useful to an investigator or family member.
- Your email account can be very revealing, especially if you use it to plan any part of your escape.
- Your home address is more than just a street name and number. In fact, it could be used to tie you to a bank or financial institution and other essential information that might be used to track you down.
- Your telephone number is also valuable. Your phone records can reveal calls that you have made that might help someone to unravel your plans.
- Photographs and videos of you can be used to identify your physical appearance.
- Your career history and job experience might be helpful if someone wanted to track you down.
- Your hobbies and interests can help pinpoint who you are as much as a fingerprint or DNA sample.

As you can see, the act of deleting yourself is one that will require you to be thorough and meticulous. The more information you can eliminate, the less likely it is that somebody will be able to find you.

### **Skip Tracers and How They Work**

When you make the decision to vanish, one of your biggest concerns has to be the possibility that someone in your life will hire a professional skip

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tracer to find you. A skip tracer is a professional bloodhound – someone whose job it is to find people who don't want to be found.

A good skip tracer will look at your online profiles for clues about where to find you. Any information you leave online might offer a clue to your whereabouts, so you have to be very careful when you start the process of deleting yourself. Even a random comment on a blog about how you've always wanted to visit a particular city might be enough to set them on your trail.

The same goes for something that a lot of people do when they want to disappear. They rent a PO Box to get their mail thinking that they'll be able to hide out from a debtor. Skip tracers can easily track a PO Box back to its owner, and the same is true of a cell phone – even one that isn't linked to a physical address. If a professional skip tracer is on your trail, you will have to be extremely thorough if you want to keep them from finding you.

### **What You Will Learn in This Book**

As you should know by now, the goal of this book is to walk you through everything you need to do to delete yourself from society and create a new life. That includes:

- How to plan your escape
- Common mistakes that people who want to disappear make
- How to delete yourself online

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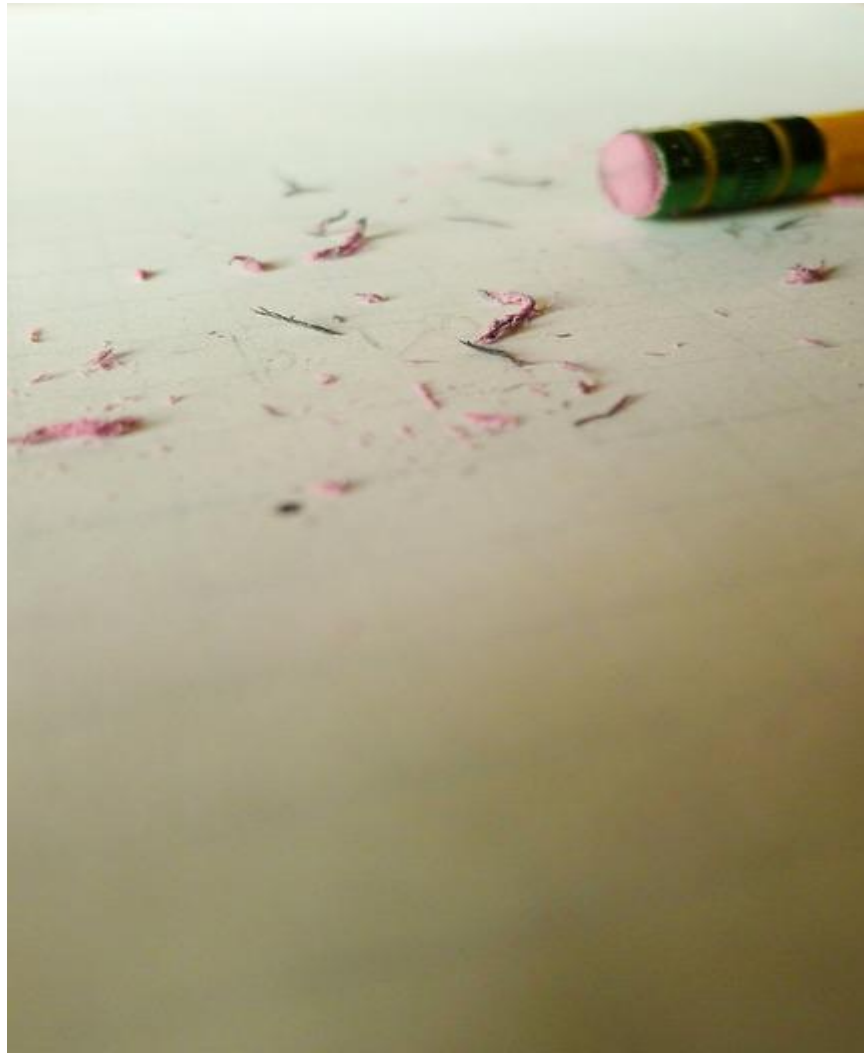
- How to delete yourself from data brokers
- How to delete yourself everywhere else
- How to reboot and create a new identity

The book will include detailed information and step-by-step instructions so you can be sure to cover your trail and make it impossible for anybody to find you. By the time you are done reading, you'll have all the information you need to vanish... without a trace.

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### **Planning Your Escape and Covering Your Tracks**

You have considered the possible ramifications and downsides of deleting yourself and starting a new life, and you still feel that – while extreme – this is the best option. That’s an important first step, but it is only a beginning. The real work begins as you take the steps necessary to erase your old life and create a new one.



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This chapter will walk you through the steps of planning and carrying out your escape. In some cases it will go into detail, and in others (such as deleting electronic traces of your existence) it will cover the big picture and the details will be covered in later chapters.

### **Making a Plan and a Backup Plan**

The first thing you need to do once you decide to delete yourself is to make a detailed plan for how you will accomplish the task. You also need to make a backup plan. The reason that you need to have a fallback position is that in addition to planning for the things you can predict, such as your family wanting to look for you, you must also plan for the things you cannot predict— such as someone you know deciding to move to the city you have chosen as your destination. You have control only over the things that you do, and if someone else does something that compromises your original plan you have only two options: initiate your backup plan, or abandon your plan altogether.

Your plan must be extremely detailed. It needs to cover:

- Where you will go
- When you will leave
- What you will bring
- What you will leave behind
- How you will travel
- What name you will use

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- How you will support yourself
- What steps you will take to cover your tracks and prevent anybody from tracking you down

Many of these questions are far more complicated than they might seem. For example, the subject of transportation is one that you may take for granted right now if you own a car. However, vehicles are easy to trace and you simply cannot afford to take your car with you. That means you need to find an untraceable alternative.

For these reasons, the process of planning your disappearance should not be rushed. You must take your time, remain calm, and do your best to think of every possible contingency and complication. If you fail to do so, the chances are high that you will be spotted or that you will miss some key piece of evidence that a determined relative or skip tracer can use to find you. You don't want that to happen, so be meticulous, organized, and thorough.

As you plan, make sure you know where you are going as well as any local laws that may affect your ability to fly under the radar. This is particularly important if you are planning on travelling internationally. You also need to know if there are limitations on how long you can stay as well as any other issues that might impact your life. You should also have a printed map of your destination, not an electronic one, including detailed directions on how to get there. In addition, it is wise to know the locations of some shelters and food kitchens – places where you can stay or find a meal in a pinch.



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When it comes to picking a destination, you must use common sense and take precautions. Your destination should be someplace where you do not know anybody within at least a hundred miles. It should also be a place where you have never lived or vacationed, and not someplace that you have mentioned wanting to live or visit. While there is some advantage to picking a city so you can disappear in a crowd, a small or mid-sized city in an out-of-the-way place may be preferable to a tourist destination. Anybody you know might turn up in New York or Chicago for a vacation or business. The chances of encountering someone you know are smaller if you go to Butte, Des Moines, or Pocatello.

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## Dealing with Your Possessions

The first issue to address after you have made a general plan, including where to go and when to leave is what you will do with your possessions. While you might imagine that you are ready to let go of your current life and leave it behind, it is not uncommon for people to have a difficult time getting rid of the things that bind them to their life.

Here are some of the things you need to destroy before you leave:

### *Photographs and Videos*

Photographs and videos of you can be used to track you down based on your appearance. Facial recognition software is getting more common with each passing year. If you are evading any kind of law enforcement or legal agency, then you must take care to eradicate your image as much as possible to reduce the chances that the people who want to find you will be able to do so. Keep in mind that you must destroy both physical images of you as well as digital images. That means destroying printed photographs and videos as well as deleting photographs of you that might be stored on your computer or online.

Keep in mind that destroying photographs will take some time. If your intention is to disappear without telling anybody – as it should be – you will have to be careful and discreet. For example, you might start by telling people you are taking a break from social media. You can then delete your

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photographs and videos – including any in which your friends or family have tagged you – prior to deleting or deactivating your account. Resist the urge to leave any photographs behind, or to take any with you.



### *Computers and Electronic Devices*

If a determined civilian, a professional skip tracer, or a law enforcement or government agency is in pursuit of you, they are likely to turn first to any electronic devices and computers you left behind in an effort to track you down. That means that not only should you leave those devices behind, you need to destroy them completely before you go. You can begin by

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deleting your files and wiping your hard drive, but you should take the additional step of physically destroying it.

The same goes for your cell phone, tablet, or any other device that might contain information that could be used to find you. You can do this by taking a drill to it or (better yet) throwing it into a large body of water. Salt water is best if you want to ensure that it is completely destroyed and cannot be restored.

You may want to bring a cell phone with you so you have a way to make a phone call or look something up on the internet. If that is the case, resist the temptation to bring your current cell phone. It may be used to trace your geographical location or online activity.

Instead, use cash to buy a disposable cell phone. You can get these phones at many grocery stores and also at places like Target and Walmart. Make sure that nobody in your life knows that you have bought the phone, and do not use it at all until you have left your current life behind. The benefit of using a disposable phone bought with cash is that there is no possible way for anybody to tie the phone to you or you to the phone. You can even buy one phone to use from the time you leave your current life until you are established in your new one, and then wipe it clean, destroy it, and buy a new one.

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### *Clothing and Other Items*

One of the biggest mistakes people make is holding on to remnants of their former lives when they want to disappear. If you want to make sure that nobody is able to track you down after you vanish, then the best thing to do is to forget about sentimentality and leave everything behind or destroy it before you go. That means that you will not be able to keep any gifts that you have received or any mementos of your former life. It might seem cruel to leave behind every trace of who you were, but it is the only way to be sure that those items cannot be used to identify you.

The same is true of clothing. In fact, you should buy new clothing before you go. Later in the book there will be some detailed information about how to dress and comport yourself, but for now, simply remember that bringing your varsity jacket or your favorite flannel shirt is a bad idea. Those things can help someone who knows you well spot you in a crowd or in video footage, and that defeats the purpose of disappearing.

It is also a good idea to wipe your belongings and home free of fingerprints before you go – at least as much as you can. The goal is to make it difficult for anybody to trace you. If your fingerprints are on file with the government – as they may be if you have worked in any type of sensitive job – then there is very little to be done about it. However, if they are not on file then wiping them clean can eliminate one more potential way for someone to track you down.

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## Transportation

When you are planning to disappear, you might imagine that you will be able to drive away in your car. However, your vehicle is a possession that is very easy to trace. Presumably it has been registered with your state's Department of Motor Vehicles and the people who know you also know what you drive. Your car has a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) that can be used to connect it to you.



If you want your car to disappear, you have two options. The first is simply to leave it parked outside your home. Remove any identifying items or personal belongings from it, wipe it of fingerprints, and leave it behind. However, there is a better option. Instead of leaving it at home, clean it and remove all personal items first. Then, wearing gloves, drive it to a bad neighborhood. Leave it there, unlocked, with the keys in the ignition and the

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pink slip in the glove compartment. It will be an invitation to thieves and it will disappear.

The best modes of transportation to use are those that will either keep you away from crowds or let you blend into them. You should avoid using taxis or hitchhiking, as you may be exposing yourself to identification. Consider walking, riding a bicycle, or using public transportation. If you decide to use public transportation, remember that there may be cameras present. Wear a hat pulled low over your forehead or a hooded sweatshirt to hide your face to minimize the chances that you will be recognized.

One final word of caution: do not travel by airplane, no matter how much easier it might be to get to your destination that way. Air travel is highly scrutinized and requires identification. Even if you have gone to the trouble of obtaining a new identity – more about that later in the chapter – you are still asking for trouble. Many airports are equipped with facial recognition software and cameras. If people are looking for you, you can be reasonably certain that airports and other centers of transportation are the first places they will check. The best way to avoid being followed is to avoid flying. Find some other way to get to your destination.

### **Financial Considerations**

How will you pay your way once you disappear? This is another area where it is possible to make foolish assumptions that can lead to being located by the people you are trying to leave behind.



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The first thing you need to do is to spend some time during the planning phase accumulating untraceable money. You have a few options:

1. You can withdraw cash and carry it with you. If you withdraw a little bit at a time, you can avoid attracting attention. Do not withdraw a large amount of cash all at once, as that might be remembered or traced. The downside of this option is that cash is bulky.
2. Another option is to withdraw cash and then use it to buy untraceable gift cards. Visa and MasterCard gift cards can be used almost anywhere. You may also want to get some gift cards for chain restaurants, but it's a good idea to choose restaurants that you do not frequent in your current life. The same is true of gift cards for stores such as Target and Walmart. Not only can you use them in almost any city, but they can – in some cases – be traded online and used in place of cash or a credit card.
3. The final option you have is to accumulate bitcoin. Bitcoin is untraceable online currency. It may be difficult to understand the technology and if you're not comfortable with it, stick to the other things discussed here.

The most important thing to remember is that you must destroy every credit card you own. Cut them into small pieces and resist all temptation to bring them with you or use them. This is an area where one small slip-up could cost you everything.



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When it comes to accessing bank accounts, investment accounts, or any other form of finance, you are going to have to do what you can to remove money before you leave and then resign yourself to leaving the rest of it behind. Any attempt to withdraw money after you have disappeared is likely to attract attention and scrutiny. It might be difficult to leave a large retirement account or investment account behind, but it is the only way to be sure that those accounts cannot be used to track you down.



The final thing you should consider when it comes to dealing with your finances is creating a Limited Liability Company (LLC) to loosely tie yourself to a means of paying bills and accessing money. Some states, such as New Mexico, make it very easy to start a company that cannot be

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traced. If you decide to use this method, the best way to cover your tracks is to create a multi-member LLC that has other LLCs as its managing members. This type of organization is a fairly complicated one. If you are not comfortable with the procedure, or you are unwilling to deal with the potential legal ramifications, it may be best simply to proceed using cash, gift cards, and bitcoin and forget about using any kind of legal organization to help you with bills.

### **Self-Defense**

In the event that you are running from somebody who wishes to do you harm, whether it is an abusive spouse or parent, a stalker, or a loan shark or some other criminal, it may be wise to learn some self-defense techniques or train yourself how to use a weapon before you go.

If you decide to learn self-defense, do your best to keep the fact that you are training from the people who know you. You may want to take a class in a neighboring city or find some other way to be discreet so that you don't give away the information to someone who may be able to use it to hurt you or find you later.

Weapons are another matter. It should go without saying at this point that any weapon you acquire must be bought with cash and not be traceable to you in any way. Guns are difficult – but not impossible – to obtain without revealing your identity. You will certainly not be able to walk into a gun shop and buy a gun without identification. You should resist the temptation

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to bring any weapon you already own with you, especially a firearm. If you want to bring a gun, buy a new one and do not let anybody in your life know that you have done so.

### **Leave False Trails, Smoke Screens, and Disinformation**

While it is essential to destroy all traces of your existence in your current home, including photographs and electronics, it is equally important to leave behind something for the people who may be trying to find you to follow. That might seem counterintuitive, but if you think about it makes a great deal of sense.



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You know that when you disappear, someone will look for you. If you are running from an abusive partner or family member, that person will want to find you out of fear that you may have gone to the authorities, and also to maintain their sense of control over you. If you are fleeing from a debtor or a government agency such as the IRS, you can be certain that they will pursue you in any way they can to try to collect what you owe them. The same is true if you have committed a crime. Even if the only reason you are disappearing is because you don't like your life and want to hit the reset button, the chances are good that someone in your life – a friend, family member, or colleague – will attempt to find out where you have gone.

That being the case, which would you rather have happen? Would you rather have the people who pursue you left with nothing to follow except your real trail – the way you actually went – or do you think it might be better to leave them a false trail, something that will keep them occupied while you increase the distance between you and become more and more difficult to find? Certainly the latter option is preferable. Trails become harder to follow the colder they become. A bus driver who might be able to identify you today will find it difficult to do so in a week, or a month, or a year. A cashier at the supermarket who might remember that you bought gift cards on a regular basis now won't retain that information for long.

With that in mind, here are some suggestions of things you can do to try to throw people off your trail:

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- Leave behind a fake itinerary or note. For example, you might want to accidentally on purpose leave a torn itinerary or directions to someplace in the trash or recycling bin in your home. If you make it look as if you tried to destroy it or simply forgot about it, it is more likely that the people who want to find you will believe that it is a valid clue to where you have gone.
- Another option is to go to the trouble of buying an airline ticket, train ticket, or bus ticket that you have no intention of using. The best way to accomplish this task is to buy the ticket using a credit card. Remember, this is the one time when you want to leave a trail of breadcrumbs. The ticket you buy should match up in some way with the other information you leave behind. You don't necessarily need to leave multiple itineraries because that may be an indication that none of the trails you have left is legitimate. A better alternative is to buy, say, a plane ticket from San Francisco to Argentina, and then leave driving directions from your home to the airport in San Francisco. That's a plausible trail that someone might pursue.
- You may also want to consider leaving an electronic trail. For example, you might set up a temporary email address using one of the free email providers such as Hotmail or Yahoo. You can fill that email inbox with phony information – information about travel plans, a new job, or anything else that might point the people who are looking for you in a false direction.
- Finally, you may want to lay a trail of disinformation among the people who know you. You must be careful not to be too obvious about this, but a few casual mentions about wanting to visit a



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particular place can go a long way toward lending credence to the fake trail you leave behind. The people you leave this information with should be people who are not part of your inner circle. In other words, don't tell your sister that you have always wanted to live in Argentina. Instead, mention it to the file clerk at work or the barista at your local coffee shop. The people trailing you – especially if they are government agents or professional skip tracers – aren't going to fall for a trail that seems designed to draw them in. If they have to work to find the information they will be likely to believe it.



The other thing that you must keep in mind when it comes to laying false trails is that in the days, weeks, and months leading up to your departure,

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you are going to have to lie to the people who are closest to you. That may include some – or all – of the following:

- Lying about your plans
- Providing false information to explain behavior that might otherwise seem odd, such as deleting social media accounts or getting rid of personal belongings
- Reassuring anybody who seems suspicious or unsettled
- Agreeing to future plans and contingencies that you have no intention of following through on
- Making promises that you will be unable to keep

If you are essentially an honest and reliable person, it might be very difficult to take these steps. However, if you hedge or equivocate in any way, it might tip someone off to your plans. Your goal here is to vanish without a trace. If the people around you are on high alert or notice unusual behavior on your part, you may do irrevocable damage to your plans.

### **How to Change Your Identity Legally**

If you are going to disappear from your current life, you need a new identity. There are several ways to go about this. If you do it legally, you will avoid some of the possible ramifications associated with obtaining a fake ID or identity. However, a legal name change will also leave a trail that could be followed by someone who is determined to find you.

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## *Legal Options*

It is possible to make a legal name change, but you need to have valid reasons. For example, if you are fleeing from an abusive person or a stalker, it is very likely that a court will be willing to allow you to change your name. However, if you are fleeing debt or a crime, no court is going to agree to let you dodge your obligations.

The benefits of doing a legal name change are:

- You will be able to obtain a driver's license, birth certificate, and other essential documentation that will allow you to function in society.
- You will have a valid Social Security Number that will allow you to collect benefits when you retire and also take advantage of government entitlement programs such as Medicare.
- It will be easier for you to find employment than it would be if you had to stick to cash or under-the-table options.

If you decide to pursue a legal name change, the best thing to do is to choose a name that:

1. Has no association with your prior name – in other words, don't use your middle name, a relative's name, or a name that the people closest to you know you like; and



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2. Is fairly common, making it difficult for people to track you down. It is much more difficult to locate one David Smith among thousands than it is to find the one and only Phineas Magillicuddy.

Once you have obtained a legal name change, you may be able to get a new Social Security Number to go with it. Again, you will need a valid reason. If you are escaping an abuser or stalker, you can get documentation from the local police to bring to the Social Security office. Your new number can be linked to your new name.

### *Illegal Options*

It isn't difficult to find options to change your identity online. There are plenty of websites and individuals who promise to sell people a new name and identity, complete with birth certificates, photo IDs, and even Social Security numbers.

You should be wary of these people. They may be doing things like selling the same identification to more than one person – something that can lead to legal and financial problems for you down the road – or selling you an identity that belongs to a dead person. In either case, the probability is high that you will end up drawing unwanted attention, and that can be a real problem.

The most important thing to remember is that your goal is to disappear. If you get involved in anything illegal such as buying a Social Security

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number or fake ID, you are providing anybody who might want to pursue you with a trail that could enable them to find you. A true disappearance is difficult to pull off in this modern age, but it is possible if you are willing to accept a simple way of life and to eschew some of the benefits that come with having a legal identity and paperwork.

### Legal Consequences

The final thing you need to consider before you disappear is any legal ramifications of doing so. If you are disappearing to get away from an abuser, you probably don't have to worry about legal issues as much as you do personal ones. However, if your intention is to evade debt or avoid prosecution on criminal charges, you do need to understand what you are risking by leaving.



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Your best bet is to consult with a lawyer. Make sure that you pay for the legal advice you get and that your consultation is covered by attorney/client privilege. A good lawyer can advise you on the proper steps to take to avoid future problems.

Now that you understand what is involved in planning your escape, the next step is to make sure that you avoid common mistakes. That's the topic of the coming chapter.

### **Top Mistakes You Can Make**

One of the most difficult things about deleting yourself and disappearing is finding a way to do it without making any mistakes. Even a small thing can end up tripping you up.

Let's look at an example from a popular movie. The popular 1991 movie *Sleeping with the Enemy* featured Julia Roberts as an abused wife who decided to run away from her husband. She came up with an elaborate plan that involved faking her own death in a boating accident. She planned everything carefully, assuming a new identity and living in a new city where she did her best to stay under the radar. She probably would have been fine – but she made one key mistake.



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The character she played got rid of her wedding ring by flushing it down the toilet. Unfortunately, it didn't flush and her husband found it – and that was all he needed to realize that she had faked her death. He was wealthy, so he used his money to track her down. If she had done the smart thing and dropped her wedding ring into the ocean, she probably never would have been discovered.

You don't want to be like that character. You want to do all the right things, and make all the right choices, so that you don't have to worry about anybody finding a trail that could lead to you. This chapter will cover some of the most common mistakes people make when they are trying to disappear so you can avoid making them.

### **Mistakes to Avoid**

What are the mistakes that people make when they are trying to leave their old lives behind? Here are some of the most common:

- They make the decision to leave in a hurry, and without properly planning it. You might want to rush but there is very little to be gained by making a rash and ill-considered decision to abandon your life. You must do things the right way, taking the time to create a solid plan and erase any information that might help someone find you.
- They fail to prepare financially and emotionally for what it will mean to delete themselves. If you don't have the means to support yourself or



## Delete Yourself

a clear idea of what it will be like to disappear from your life, you may find that the decision backfires on you.

- They decide to fake their own death. Remember how well that worked out for the Julia Roberts character? Deaths raise all kinds of questions. The people in your life may doubt that you are dead if there is no body. Authorities may look for you with far more determination than they would if you simply vanished. It's extremely difficult to fake a death convincingly, and it is best not to try.



- They fake a kidnapping or some other form of disappearance. This option has many of the same risks associated with faking death. A kidnapping is a dramatic event, one that will attract legal and law

## Delete Yourself

enforcement scrutiny. The best way to disappear is to do it quietly, without drama.

- They leave in some other way that involves a great deal of drama and emotional upheaval. There is no denying that the people who care about you will be emotional when they discover that you have left. However, the manner in which you leave should be low-key and specifically designed not to draw unwanted attention. Drama is not your friend.
- They buy a fake ID, fake passport, or steal someone else's identity. The problem with buying fake legal documents is that it is against the law. It leaves a trail. Even someone who claims to be discreet may end up giving the authorities information about you if they are pressured to do so.
- They tell a close friend or family member that they are planning to disappear. In rare cases, you may be able to maintain contact with a select person in your old life. However, in most cases it is simply not possible. If you want to disappear without a trace, it is your responsibility not to leave any traces. Speaking to anybody about your plans is a very good way to ensure that somebody will be able to track you down later.
- They bring a prized possession or keepsake with them. It is understandable to want to maintain some kind of tenuous connection to your old life, but after you leave you can be certain that anybody who wants to find you will make an effort to determine what – if anything – you brought with you. Any memento you bring could be

## Delete Yourself

used to track you down, so resist the temptation and leave everything behind.

- They log in to their old email accounts or social media accounts as a way of checking up on family and friends. There is no point in deleting your online presence if you reactivate it or log in later. Any online activity can create a trail of electronic bread crumbs that might allow a detective, skip tracer, or government official to track you down.
- They bring credit cards or ATM cards with them “just in case” and end up using them to make a purchase or get cash. The thought of being financially untethered from your old life – and of not having a way to earn a living – can be unsettling and frightening. It is understandable to feel fear and uncertainty, but if you do anything that has the potential to link your new identity and location to your old identity and location, you run the risk that someone will find you.
- They Google their old name to see if anybody is searching for them or posting about them online. This is a very common mistake, and an understandable one. Many people feel a pull toward their old lives after they disappear and they want to reassure themselves that they are not being pursued. The problem with running a Google search once you have disappeared is that, again, it creates an electronic trail that could lead somebody to your door.
- They commit crimes that point law enforcement or skip tracers in their direction. Once you vanish, you must be extremely careful not to do anything to draw attention to yourself. Even minor traffic violations or petty larcenies can be enough to attract scrutiny. You need to drive



## Delete Yourself

within the speed limit and obey the law. Keep your head down and you will be able to avoid unwanted attention.

- They run from the cops. It is certainly understandable to want to avoid prosecution or prison time, but one of the best ways to ensure that you will live a life of fear and uncertainty is to run from the police. They are accustomed to people running from them, and well-equipped to pursue you wherever you go.



There are, of course, other mistakes that people make, but these are the most common. Now that you know what they are, it's time to look at the practical steps you need to take before you disappear to ensure that it is

## Delete Yourself

impossible to find you. That will start in the next chapter with a complete explanation of how to delete yourself online.

## Delete Yourself

### **How to Delete Yourself from the Internet**

In the days before we tracked everything digitally and lived our lives online, it was relatively easy to disappear from your life. There was no Google, no online job listings, and no social media. We were connected with a relatively small group of people, most of whom lived in the same immediate area as we did. If we vanished, it would prove difficult – if not impossible – to learn where we had gone.

That all changed with the invention of the worldwide web, and it has become increasingly more difficult as social media usage and cell phones have become commonplace. It is no longer possible to walk away from your life without considering the information that is available about you online. You may have shared information about your friends, family, education, professional life, hobbies, and interests. All of that information is available, to some degree, to anybody who looks for it.

For that reason, the very first and most important thing you must do if you want to disappear from your life is to eradicate your online presence. Even if you have been relatively discreet in terms of what you share online, the chances are good that there is far more information about you on the internet than you realize. In addition to the information you may have posted about yourself, you also have to be aware that your friends and family may have shared information about you, including photographs, videos, and detailed personal information.

## Delete Yourself

The good news is that very few of us actually take the steps to delete ourselves from the internet. The people in your life will not be expecting you to take these steps. The fact that you are willing to do so will put you one step ahead of anybody who might want to pursue you, and greatly increase the chances that you will succeed.

### **Delete Your Social Media Accounts and Profiles**

Any effort to delete yourself online has to begin with the places that most people share information about themselves. Social media is a relatively new phenomenon, but one that has undeniably changed the way we interact with other people. There are some benefits to using social media. For example, it allows us to keep in touch with far-flung friends and relatives, to reconnect with long-lost schoolmates, and to share information about our lives with ease.

The downside, of course, is that our lives are played out online. If you decide you want to vanish, then you have to think about how much information you might be leaving behind on your social media accounts. In the event that you have never used social media, you may still need to consider the possibility that your friends and family members have shared information about you and your life. Nobody who wants to disappear can afford to ignore social media.

The best solution is to delete your accounts. Most of the major social media sites will now allow you to do so. In the event that you belong to a site that

## Delete Yourself

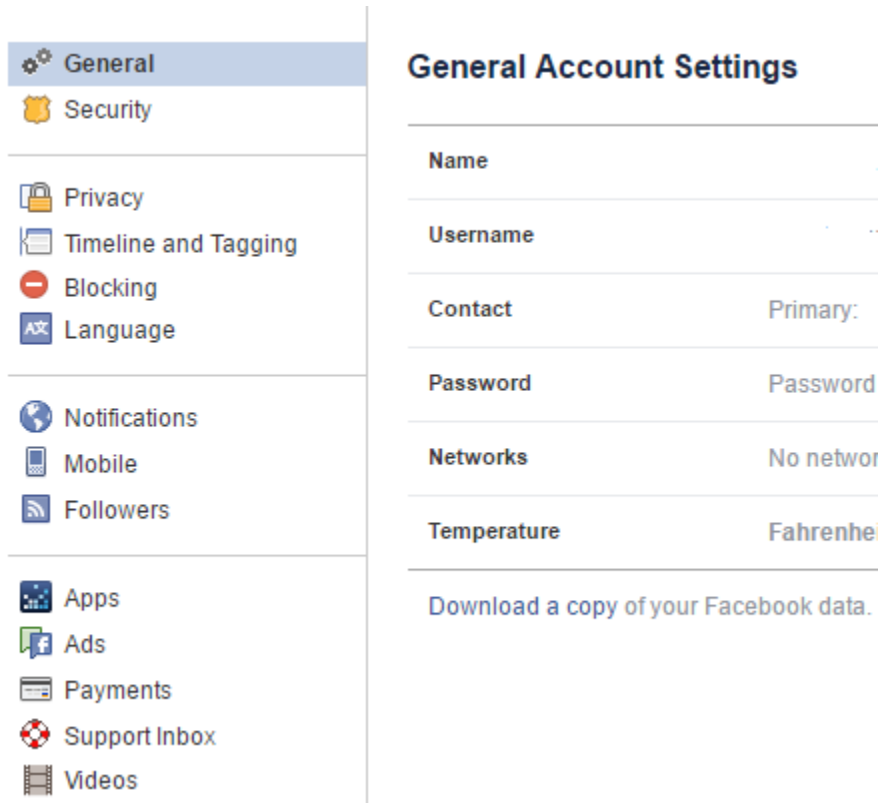
won't let you do a full deletion, the next best option is to go in and manually delete everything from your account. That may be time-consuming, but it is necessary if you want to ensure that nobody can find you.

### *Facebook*

Facebook is the largest social media network. When the site was originally founded, it was not possible to delete your account. The only option was deactivating it. However, they have since changed the site and it is now possible to delete an account completely. Here are the steps to follow to do it:

1. Log in to your Facebook account. If you haven't used your account in a while or have forgotten your password, you may need to click on the "Need help logging in" link to access your account.
2. At the top right-hand corner of the screen, click the down arrow to access the menu and then click Settings.
3. Under the General Settings menu, you will see an option to download your data in case you want to save anything. While it isn't a good idea to leave anything online, you may have something you want to save onto a thumb drive or CD. If not, you can feel free to skip this step. If you do want to save something, click the "Download a copy of your Facebook data" option at the bottom of the Settings menu and follow the instructions provided.

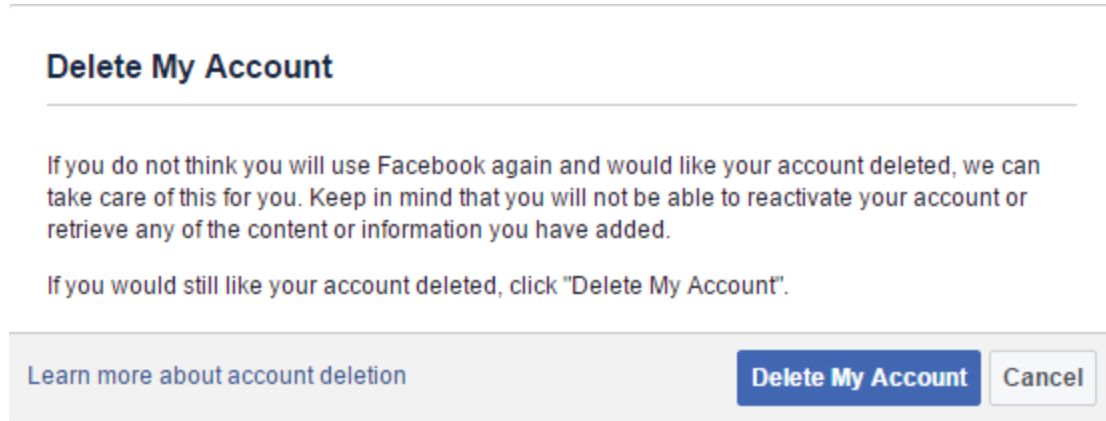
## Delete Yourself



4. Clear your Facebook history as much as possible. It may take as long as two weeks for your account to be deleted. Also, deleting your account will not delete certain information, such as comments you have made on other people's posts. If you want to get rid of those, you'll have to go to your Privacy settings by clicking the little lock at the top of the page. Then click See More Settings and click "Use Activity Log." You can then clear your information by clicking the little pencil icon next to each activity.
5. Finally, visit [this link](#) to permanently delete your account. It isn't accessible through regular Facebook menus, so under normal circumstances you'd have to search for it to find it. If you look under

## Delete Yourself

the regular menu, you'll see only the option to deactivate your account – something that isn't permanent.



Remember that it might take as long as two weeks for your account to be deleted. If you don't want people to be tipped off to your plans, it may be best not to announce that you're leaving social media.

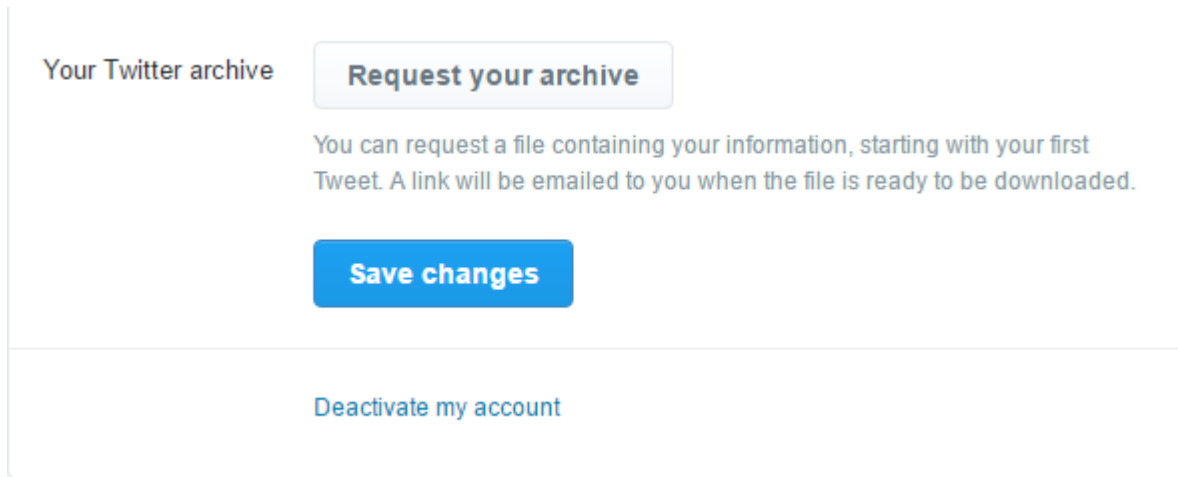
### *Twitter*

If you've been using Twitter, you have the option to delete your account permanently, but the deletion starts as a deactivation that can be reversed within 30 days by logging in. Here's how to delete your Twitter account:

1. Log on to your Twitter account.
2. Click your profile picture at the upper right corner of the screen, and then select Settings from the drop-down menu.

## Delete Yourself

3. Scroll down. Toward the bottom of the menu you will see a button that will allow you to access a copy of your Twitter archive if you want it, as well as a link to deactivate your account.



Your Twitter archive

[Request your archive](#)

You can request a file containing your information, starting with your first Tweet. A link will be emailed to you when the file is ready to be downloaded.

[Save changes](#)

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[Deactivate my account](#)

If you feel the need to save your Twitter information you should request a copy of your archive first before deactivating your account. Otherwise, just click the link to deactivate and follow the instructions. Your account will likely disappear within 24 hours or so, but you will have 30 days to reactivate if you want to do so.

### *Linked In*

If you have been used Linked In for business or networking, you'll have to get rid of your profile there too. It might be difficult to get rid of a network you have worked hard to create, but the only way you can disappear is by reinventing yourself. The network you built up in your profession isn't really going to help you when you start over, and the information listed on your



## Delete Yourself

Linked In account could help someone find you. Here are the steps to follow to delete your account:

1. Log in to your Linked In account
2. Click your profile picture at the top right-hand corner of the screen
3. Choose the Privacy and Settings option from the menu
4. At the bottom of the menu, you'll see an option to close your account.

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### Subscriptions

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#### Try Premium for free

Unlock the power of LinkedIn

Change

---

#### Closing your account

Learn about your options, and close your account if you wish

Change

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5. You'll be taken to a screen asking you why you want to close your account. Choose an option from the menu and then follow the instructions to close your account.

## Delete Yourself

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Tell us why you're closing your account:

- I have a duplicate account
- I'm getting too many emails
- I'm not getting any value from my membership
- I have a privacy concern
- I'm receiving unwanted contact
- Other

### *My Space*

You might not have accessed your My Space account for years, but if it's still there it might contain information that could hurt you. Here's how to delete it for good:

1. Sign into your My Space account
2. Click the My Stuff button on the left-hand side of the page
3. Choose Account Settings from the menu
4. Click the "Delete Account" button

You should also delete any other social media accounts you have, including Pinterest and Instagram.

### **Delete Yourself from Search Engines**

There are few sure things in life, but you can be reasonably certain that one of the first things that someone who is searching for you will do is look on

## Delete Yourself

search engines such as Google and Bing to see what they can find. One of the best things you can do to prevent them from finding you is to delete yourself from the most popular search engines, including Google, Bing, and Yahoo.

### *Google Search*

The first thing you need to do is search your real name on Google to see what search results you get. You should search your first and last name, with and without your middle name. You should also search for your full name in combination with any unique user names or aliases you have used online. For example, if you have posted comments on a news blog under the name “PatriotDad,” you should also search:

“PatriotDad” “Your Name”

Make sure to include the quotes because that will get you a list of very specific results that will help you find your own comments so you can delete them. If you can’t actually delete them, you have a couple of options:

1. Write to the webmaster of the account where they are posted and ask for them to be deleted; or

## Delete Yourself

2. Change the name on your account. This won't remove them from Google, but it will at least shield you somewhat and may cause the person searching for you some confusion.

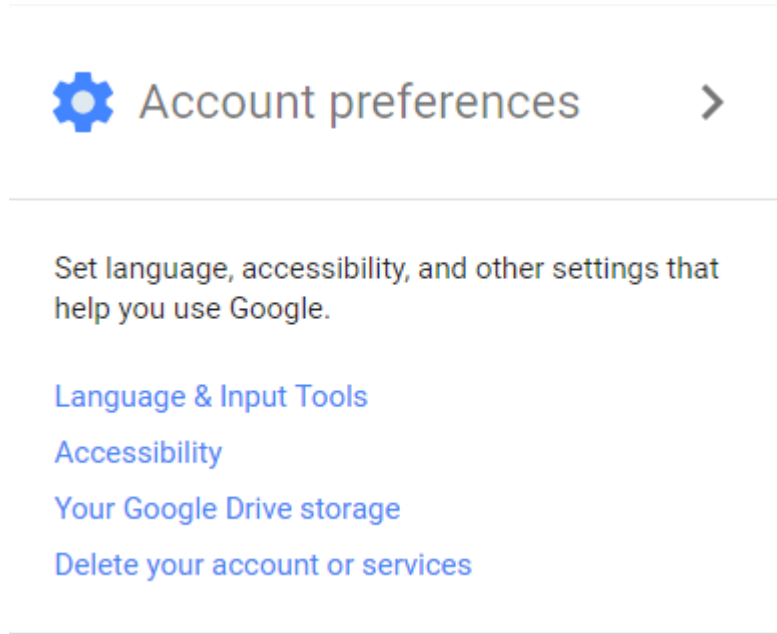
It is important to note that neither of these options will erase the Google search result, but once the things you find about yourself are deleted, people will get a "404-Not Found" page instead of what they were hoping to find.

### *Google Account*

The next step is to delete your Google account. This will delete your Google account completely, making it so that you cannot access Gmail, your YouTube account (if you have one) and anything else that may require you to sign in with your Google ID. Here's how to do it.

1. Go to the MyAccount page by clicking [here](#).
2. Sign in to your Google account.
3. Look for the Account preferences box, and choose "Delete your account or services" from the menu.

## Delete Yourself



4. Choose "Delete Google account and data" from the list.
5. Review the information being deleted.
6. Check both boxes at the bottom of the page.
7. Choose "Delete Account" to delete your account.

It is very important not to take this step unless you are sure. You may have a limited amount of time to attempt to restore your account following the directions [here](#), but in some cases it may not be possible. Wait until the last minute to delete your Google account.

### *Bing Search*

You can follow the same initial steps that you did on Google to remove individual search results on Bing. You also have an option to contact Bing directly to ask them to remove your results. Here's how to do it.

## Delete Yourself

1. Go to the Bing Email Support [Page](#).
2. Enter your name and email address.
3. Select “Question about content on Bing” from the first drop-down menu.
4. Pick “Remove content” from the second drop-down menu.
5. Enter as much information as you can to help Bing understand what you want to do: a description of the problem, the keywords that you want them to investigate (meaning your name as well as any user names you may have searched), the search URL, and any specific websites you want to them to look at.
6. Click submit and wait for a Bing representative to contact you. They will be able to assist you in what you want to do.

### *Bing Account*

If you have a Bing account you have been using for advertising, you will need to delete that too. Here’s how to do it.

1. Sign into your Bing account.
2. If you have active campaigns or owe any money, you will have to take care of that first. To do that, go to the Campaigns page, and select all campaigns.
3. After you have selected the campaigns, click “Edit” and then select “Pause.”
4. Click the little gear icon and then select “Accounts and Billing.”

## Delete Yourself

5. Select the Billing tab and then click “Pay Account Balance.”
6. After you have paid, click the Details tab.
7. Choose the accounts you want to delete, and then click Delete.

You can still sign in to a deleted account to access information, so make sure that nobody has your login information or password.

### *Yahoo Search*

Yahoo search may not be as widely trafficked as Google or Bing, but if you want to delete yourself you have to address it. Just as you did with the other search engines, start by doing a search of your full name and any aliases that you may have used online. Send emails to any individual webmasters whom you have not already contacted to ask them to remove information about you.

If there is personal information posted about you, you will have to contact Yahoo help directly to get them to try to remove it. It is important to note that if a website is not owned by Yahoo, they cannot force somebody to remove the information in question. However, they can and will remove that information from their search results. You can contact them about inappropriate or personal content by clicking [here](#).

After you have contacted all of the webmasters and requested removal of information about you, it will take between six and eight weeks for Yahoo’s



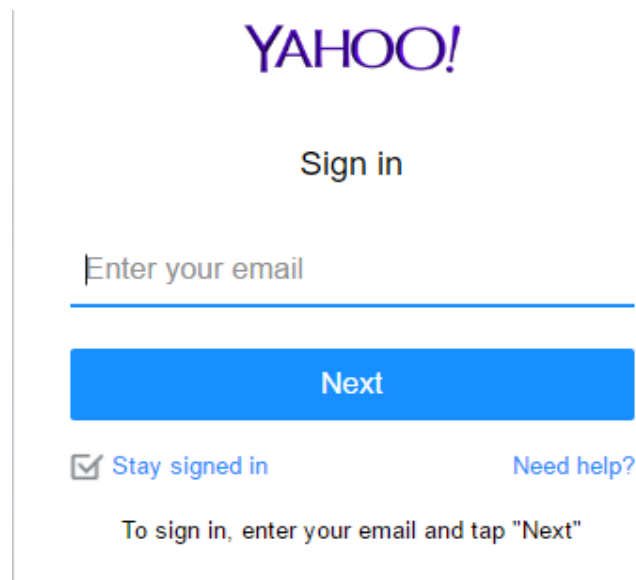
## Delete Yourself

search content to refresh so the results are no longer there when someone searches for you.

### *Yahoo Account*

After you have dealt with Yahoo's search results, you also need to delete your Yahoo account. Here's how to do it:

1. Go to the "Terminating your account" Yahoo page, [here](#).
2. Enter your email address.



The image shows a screenshot of the Yahoo! sign-in page. At the top, the word "YAHOO!" is written in a purple, stylized font. Below it, the text "Sign in" is centered. There is a text input field with the placeholder text "Enter your email". Below the input field is a blue button with the word "Next" in white. Underneath the button, there is a checkbox that is checked, followed by the text "Stay signed in". To the right of this is a link that says "Need help?". At the bottom of the form area, there is a small instruction: "To sign in, enter your email and tap 'Next'".

3. Confirm your password.
4. Click "Terminate this Account."

## Delete Yourself

It is important to note that if you have a child and family account, you will have to delete the linked accounts first before you delete your primary account.

### **Delete Yourself from Shopping Accounts**

Your purchasing habits can reveal a great deal about you. Not only might they help a skip tracer or investigator learn about you, if you made recent purchases related to your planned escape, they might be able to obtain specific information that would help them trace your steps. For that reason, it is extremely important to delete yourself from any online shopping accounts that you have opened.

With that in mind, here are some basic instructions for deleting yourself from some of the biggest online retailers.

#### *Amazon*

To close your Amazon account, you need to start by making sure that any outstanding issues have been resolved. Log in to your account and click the “My Account” button. If you have pending orders, cancel them. (Note that if the order is already being prepared for shipment, you will not be able to cancel it. In that case, you will have to wait for it to be shipped and delivered before you can cancel your account.) If you sell items on Amazon, you will have to resolve any issues with your buyers before you delete your account.

# Delete Yourself

Once you have cleared your account of any outstanding issues, follow these steps to delete it:

1. Log in to your Amazon account.
2. Click on Help and do a search for “Contact Us” or click [here](#) to get to the page.
3. Click the “Prime or Something Else” tab.
4. Choose “Account Settings” from the first drop-down menu, and then “Close My Account” from the second drop-down menu.

## Contact Us

**1** What can we help you with?

An order I placed    Amazon Devices and Kindle Apps    Digital Services    **Prime or Something else**

**Make a change to your account**  
Click on the buttons at right to handle common account activities.  
Visit [Your Account](#) to view and edit all of your account preferences.  
If your issue cannot be fixed here, please continue describing your issue below so we can assist you.

Manage Payment Options  
Manage Prime Membership  
Apply Gift Card to Account  
Manage Address Book  
[Show more](#)

**2** Tell us more about your issue

Select an issue    Account settings

Select issue details    Close my account

**Solve the issue here:**  
Visit our Help pages to learn more about [closing your account](#).

5. Select your contact method – Phone, Email, or Chat – and then talk to an Amazon representative to delete your account.

# Delete Yourself

## *EBay*

Closing an eBay account is relatively straightforward. Follow these steps:

1. Log into your account.
2. Review your account to make sure that you don't owe anybody money – and that nobody owes you money.
3. Pay any fees that you owe to other vendors.
4. Request any refunds or payments owed to you.
5. Click [here](#) to go to the page to close your account.
6. Go to the “Closing account” page and then click “Submit a request to close your account.”
7. Answer the eBay security questions – answer honestly, and when it appears, click “No, please close my account.”

Note that your account may not close immediately. If you have any pending transactions, there will be a waiting period – but eBay will send you an email confirmation once your account is closed.

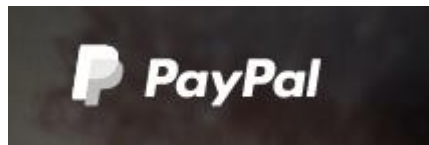
## *PayPal*

PayPal is linked to eBay, but you must still close your account separately. To do it, follow these instructions:

1. Log in to your PayPal account.

## Delete Yourself

2. Check to make sure you don't have any pending transactions.
3. Transfer any funds in your account to your bank account.
4. If necessary, wait a few days for pending transactions to clear and your account to be emptied.
5. Go to your account page and click "Settings."
6. Click the "Close Account" link and follow the instructions.



It is very important to close out all transactions and empty your account before closing it.

### *Other Accounts*

There are thousands of online shopping sites and it is neither practical nor possible to list them all here. However, there is a resource you can use to find out how to delete all of your online accounts.

### [Just Delete Me](#)

Another option, which you may want to consider if you have a lot of online accounts or if you worry about missing something is using a professional service like Abine's [DeleteMe](#) Service. They have multiple plan options, and the nice thing about them is that they will monitor your name on an ongoing basis and make regular deletions of anything that crops up.

## Delete Yourself

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Here's how it works: ↓

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### Delete Yourself from Your Email Accounts

It is essential to delete your email accounts, but you should also be careful while doing it. You may want to keep your primary account until the last minute to avoid arousing suspicion about your plans. You can use a throwaway email to get messages related to your deletion. As mentioned earlier, in many cases you will have to wait to get emails from places like eBay and PayPal to be sure your account is deleted – and they need a valid account to send those notifications to you.

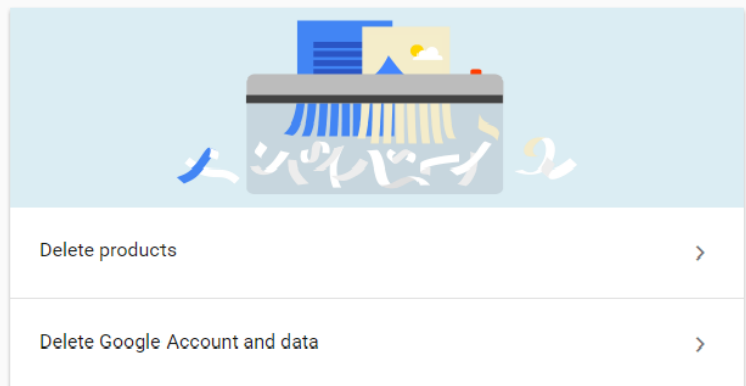
## Delete Yourself

Here are some instructions for how to delete yourself from well-known email providers:

- To delete your Gmail account, first sign into your account. Go to the “My Account” page and scroll down to the section that says “Delete Your Account or Services” – you will probably need to sign into your account again. Then next to Gmail, click “Delete,” follow the instructions, and click “Delete Gmail.” (Note that if you use Gmail through your work or school, you will need to contact your administrator to delete your account.)

### Delete your account or services

If you are no longer interested in using specific Google services like Gmail or Google+, you can delete them here. You can even delete your entire Google Account.



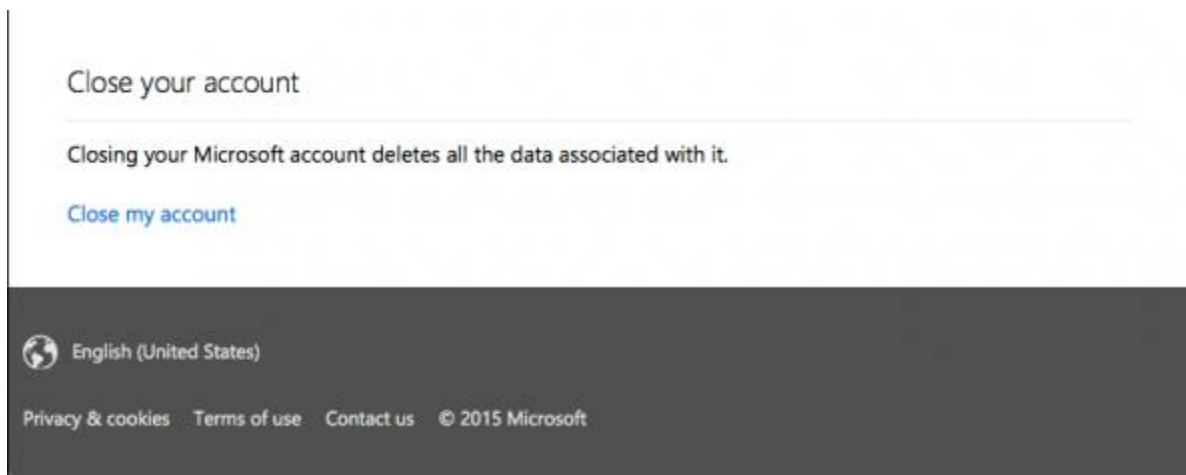
- To delete a Yahoo email account, visit the [Terminating Your Yahoo Account](#) page and sign into your email. Enter your password when you are prompted to do so, and then click “Terminate this Account.” Note that it may take up to 90 days to delete your account and all of the information associated with it, including emails. If you have a



## Delete Yourself

Yahoo Finance Premium account, the data will be stored for three years.

- To delete a Hotmail or MSN account, log into your account through Outlook. Click your account name in the upper right-hand corner of the screen, and then choose Account Settings. This will take you to your Account Page. Under the Heading “Security and Privacy” click the link that says “Manage Advanced Security.” You will have to confirm that you own the account by requesting a security code that will be sent to your email or mobile number. Once you have entered it, you will be taken to the “Security Settings” page, where you can scroll down to find the link to delete your account. Follow the directions to delete your account.



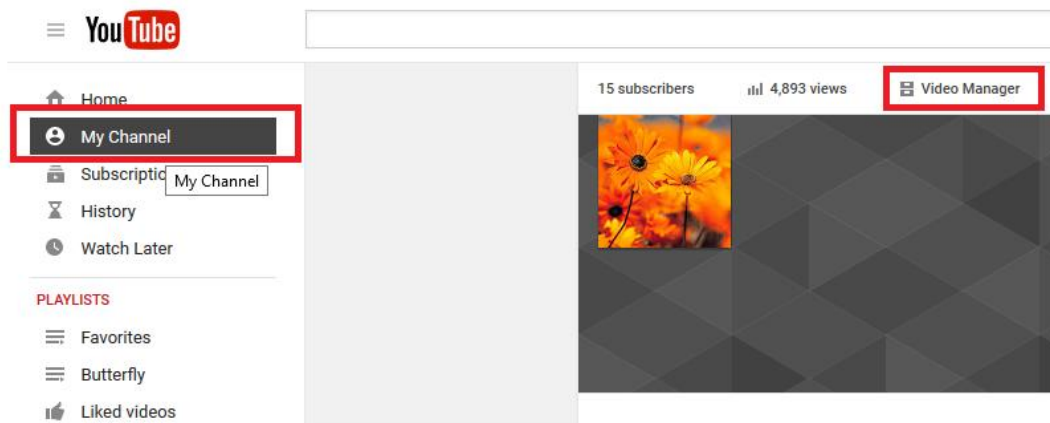
If you have an account with any other email provider, you will have to contact your provider to learn how to delete your account.

# Delete Yourself

## Delete Your Photos and Videos

The next step is to delete all photos and videos of you from the web. Keep in mind that it may be difficult to locate everything. If someone else has posted or saved one of your photos, you may never know about it unless they also happened to mention your name. However, you need to do the best you can.

- On YouTube, sign in and then click the MyChannel link on the left-hand side of the page. That will bring up a list of all your videos. To delete videos one at a time, simply select the video you want to delete, click Actions and then click Delete. To delete an entire playlist, click on the playlist. Then click the three dots that appear on the playlist page, and finally, click the “Delete Playlist” button on the right.



- On Instagram, you will have to delete photos one at a time. The easiest thing to do is to delete your entire account as mentioned

## Delete Yourself

earlier, but if you prefer you can delete your photos first. To do it, sign in and click Navigations to go to your page. Then tap the photo you want to delete to select it, and click the Options button (it has three dots on it) at the bottom. Choose “Delete” from the options to delete the photo.

- On Flickr, you can easily delete batches of photographs. Sign into your account and click the “Organize and Create” option. Then click “Batch Organize.” Drag the photos that you want to delete from the bottom up into the open area to add them to the batch. When you have added the photos you want to delete, simply click the “Edit Photos” button and then choose “Delete” from the menu.
- Deleting photos from Google Images is a bit tricky, because you will have to address the issues one at a time and Google won’t give you much help unless the photos are pornographic or violate your privacy in some tangible way. You will need to contact individual webmasters to ask them to remove the images and replace them with a 404-File Not Found message instead.

## Delete Yourself



- Photos stored in iCloud can be easily deleted in groups. All you need to do is log in to your account. Choose the Albums tab, and then choose My Photo Stream. Tap the Select button to choose the photos. You will see a check mark appear on each one. When you have selected everything you want to delete, click the little trash can icon and then choose “Delete (xx) Photos” to delete everything you have selected.

If you have accounts on any other photo storage or sharing sites, you should review their help topics or contact the webmaster to find out how to delete your photos. Some examples of other sites include SmugMug, Shutterfly, Imgur, and Photobucket.

### **Delete Yourself from Background Check Sites**

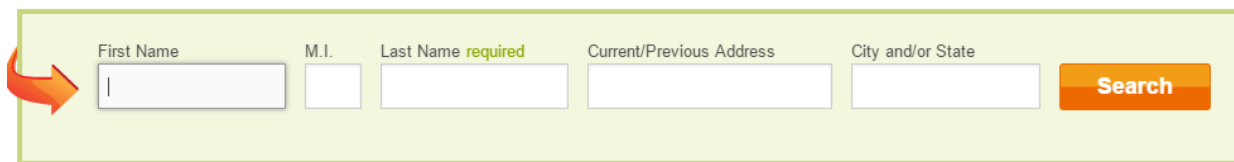
One of the big downsides of the internet is that it has become very easy for people to conduct online background checks when they want information

## Delete Yourself

about somebody. There are dozens of these sites. While nobody is legally allowed to do a background check without consent, not every site adheres to the law and requires consent. That means that you need to take action to delete yourself from these sites to minimize the chances that someone will be able to use the information there to track you down.

### Find Out with a Confidential Background Check

#### Background Check



A screenshot of a background check form. The form is titled "Background Check" and is enclosed in a light green border. It contains five input fields: "First Name", "M.I.", "Last Name" (with "required" in red text), "Current/Previous Address", and "City and/or State". To the right of these fields is an orange "Search" button. A red arrow points to the "First Name" field.

The issue is that there are many sites to review and no way to know if they have any information about you without checking. This technology Reddit has a comprehensive list of background check sites along with information on how to delete yourself from them:

#### [Background Checks Reddit](#)

The [DeleteMe](#) site I listed earlier will take care of this for you. If you decide to do it yourself, you will have to visit each site individually to get your information removed. Even then, it may be difficult to delete everything. For example, if your name and current home address are registered anywhere, you will not be able to get rid of that information.

## Delete Yourself

Here are four of the top sites. You can review the Reddit linked above to find others or – a better choice – use DeleteMe. It's worth spending a bit of money to be sure you haven't missed anything.

[Intelius](#)

[Zabasearch](#)

[Spokeo](#)

[Pipl](#)

### Delete Your Sites and Public Personas

With billions of sites on the worldwide web, it is not possible to list them all here. However, you can and should delete or shut down any websites or public personas that you own or created. Here are some steps to help you do that:

- Delete or close all of your blogs and any personal websites.
- Delete yourself from all online groups, including Yahoo Groups, Ning, Gro.ups, and any other groups you may belong to.
- Log on to any forums you have joined. First, delete all of your existing comments. Then, delete your photos, signature, and any personal profile information. Once you have done that, you should close or delete your account if possible.
- If you have submitted any articles or blog posts to third-party sites, contact the webmasters and ask them to remove the content from their site.

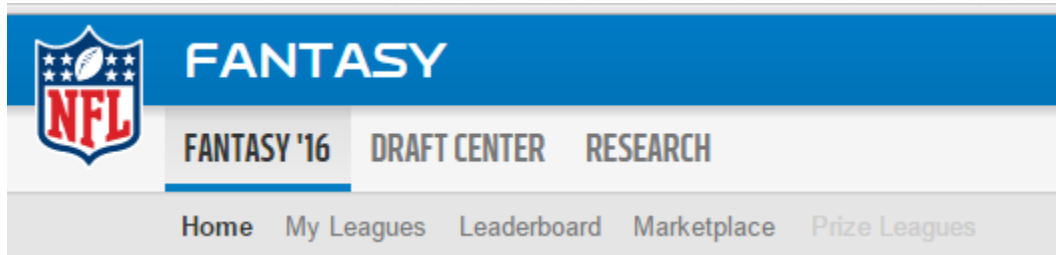
## Delete Yourself

- Visit any consumer review sites you have used, including Amazon, Yelp, TripAdvisor, and Angie's List, and delete all of the reviews you have written.
- For any other site, go to the Contact page to find the webmaster and contact them to ask them to remove your information. If you cannot find the webmaster on the site, go to [Whols](#) and look there.

### Delete Yourself from All Other Accounts and Profiles

Now it's time to get rid of anything else that may be out there. This is only a partial list, but I recommend that you sit down and try to think of every online account you have ever created, even if you haven't used it in years. Here are some things to consider:

- Sports team or fantasy sports sites



- Movie, TV, or entertainment sites
- Online gambling sites
- Video gaming sites
- News and current event sites
- Dating sites
- Messenger sites (Yahoo, MSN, Skype, etc.)

## Delete Yourself

- All other sites.

I know it can be difficult to remember every site you have ever used, but there are some tools that can help you. Here are three sites you can use to track down accounts you may have forgotten about:

[KnowEm](#)

[AccountKiller](#)

[DeleteYourAccount](#)

Once you have deleted everything listed here, I strongly recommend that you Google yourself again and clear out anything that you have missed using the techniques already discussed in this chapter. As stated earlier, Googling yourself once you have left can be risky because the activity may lead someone to you. However, it is a good idea to do one last check before you leave so you can send out final requests and get rid of anything you may have missed.

It is important to note that there may end up being some information that you simply cannot delete. If you email the webmaster of a site that has posted information about you, they may be unwilling to remove it. In that case, you will have to leave it. However, what I recommend is this:



## Delete Yourself

- If you cannot delete information, replace any personal information with generic information (John Doe, 123 Main Street, etc.)
- Delete as much information as you can from the account in question.
- Link all of the accounts that you can't close to a throwaway email address.
- Once you have changed everything, simply close the throwaway email account to create a dead end.

If you follow the information in this chapter, you will be able to delete the vast majority of information available about you online, making it extremely difficult for anybody to track you down.

While this chapter has covered most of the things you need to do to delete yourself online, there is still one big internet-related issue to address, and that is deleting yourself from online data brokers. That's what we'll cover in the next chapter.

## **How to Delete Yourself from Data Brokers**

While most of us are aware that there is information about us online, very few people realize just how much information is available – or how it is used.

When you are online and you see ads that are targeted at your particular interests, you might think of it as a good thing – or as an unsettling and creepy thing, similar to what happened to Tom Cruise in *Minority Report*. It might be convenient not to see ads that don't apply to you, but is it really preferable to see only ads that are closely targeted to you because of invasive data collection services?

## Delete Yourself



So-called data brokers mine information about internet users and then sell it to companies who use it for marketing purposes. However, there is also the possibility that somebody who wanted to track you down could use the information collected by data brokers to do so. For that reason, it is absolutely necessary to seek out these data brokers and delete as much information as you can.

### **How Much Information Do Data Brokers Have about You?**

Let's start by looking at how much information data brokers have about you. If it were as simple as them knowing that you prefer khakis to jeans, it might not be that big of an issue. However, the information they collect can – and does – go far deeper than that. Here's an overview of what they collect:

## Delete Yourself

- Basic demographic information, including your age, sex, address, contact information, occupation, and education level.
- “Life event” information including graduations, marriages, divorces, and even the arrival of a new baby.
- Hobbies and purchasing information
- Likes and dislikes
- Detailed salary information
- Charitable donations

This is only a partial list. The amount of information they collect is prodigious and should be alarming to anybody who cares about privacy. It is obvious why you need to delete your information before you disappear.

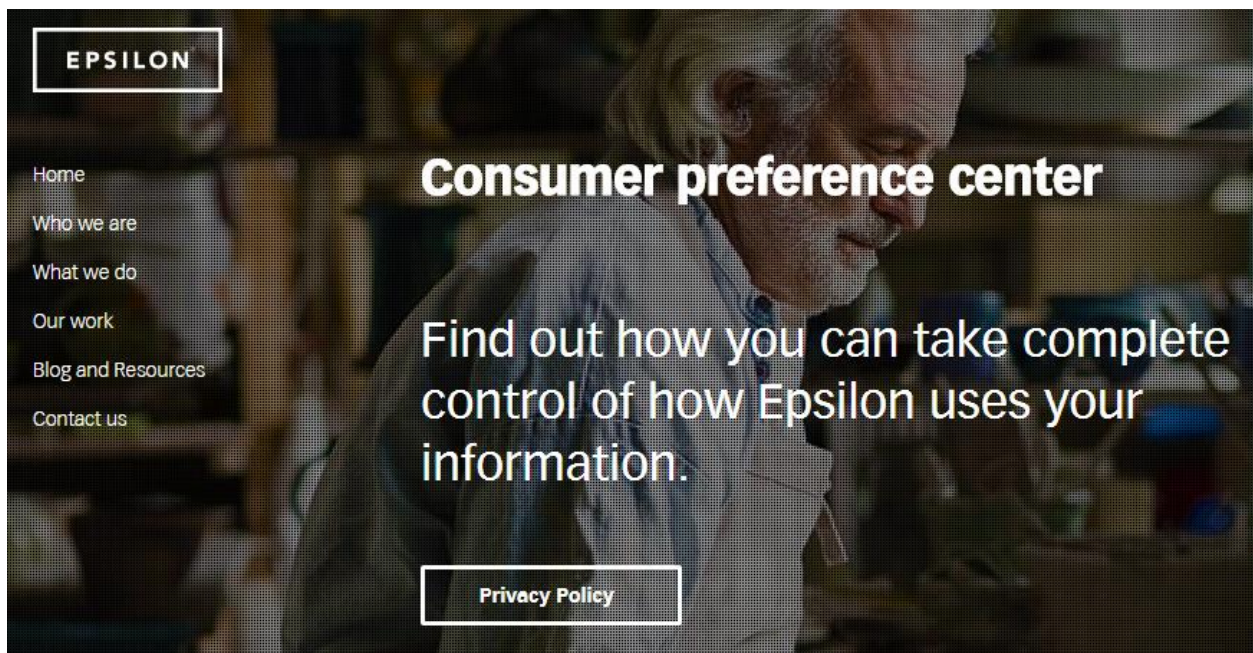
### How to Delete Yourself

The good news is that, in many cases, you can delete your information from data brokers’ websites and opt out of having them collect additional data. Unfortunately, there is no easy way to do this, you just have to visit each site individually. Here are some of the biggest sites:

- Acxiom has an easy opt-out method you can access [here](#).
- Datalogix is a problem. While they have an opt-out option that you can access on their [website](#), it doesn’t work properly and they are not responsive to inquiries. However, that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t try.

## Delete Yourself

- Direct Marketing Association (DMA Choice) requires you to set up an account to opt out of receiving mail from them. Here's the [link](#).
- EBureau also requires you to create an account in order to opt out. You can click [here](#) to set up your account, and then follow directions to opt out.
- Epsilon has a [Consumer Preference Center](#) that will let you opt out of certain aspects of their services.



- Experian requires you to visit their [Privacy Page](#) to learn how to opt out of their services.
- Intellius collects public records and other information. If you want to opt out, you must do one of two things: upload an image of your driver's license with your license number and picture removed, or submit a notarized letter to prove your identity. You can click [here](#) to get started.

## Delete Yourself

- LexisNexis' policy says that they will remove only people who can prove they are public officials or those who can prove that they are in danger as a result of the information listed on their site. You can get more information [here](#).
- PeopleFinder has an easy-to-use opt-out option that will prevent your search results from appearing on their site if people look for you. You can access it [here](#).
- Spokeo is an information aggregator, which means that removing information from their site won't remove it from the third party sites where they got it. However, you can opt out by clicking [here](#).
- On ZoomInfo, you can start by looking up your [email address](#). If you are listed, they will email you information to help you opt out.

This is only a partial list. To see a master list of all data brokers with additional information about how opt out, you can visit this page.

<http://www.stopdatamining.me/opt-out-list/>

The information covered so far has focused on deleting yourself online. However, you also need to think about offline sources of information about you. While online sources are readily available and involve less legwork to track than real world sources, anybody who is looking for you will turn to real world sources when their online searches come up dry. In the next chapter, we will talk about how to delete yourself everywhere else – so you can be sure that nobody can track you down after you disappear.

## Delete Yourself

### **How to Delete Yourself from Everything Else**

It's hard now to remember a time before the internet was a big part of our daily lives. However, it is important to keep in mind that it wasn't that long ago that we conducted business in person and via the US Postal Service. We called people instead of emailing or texting them.



As outdated or inconvenient as those methods might seem to us now, the fact is that there are still many ways to track us down that exist outside of the worldwide web. It might not be as easy to show up at a town hall or high school as it would be to do a Google search, but anybody who is determined to track you down will resort to real world methods if they must.

This chapter will walk you through how to delete yourself offline so that you can be sure there is no trail that will allow anybody to track you down once you walk away from your life.

#### **Educational Institutes**

The first thing you need to do is contact your high school, college or university, and any other school you have attended including professional schools or trade schools.



## Delete Yourself

It is unlikely that you will be able to get them to delete you from their databases and records, and doing so might raise suspicions – particularly if other people in your life attended that same school. Instead, simply tell them that you no longer wish to receive any communication from them and ask them to stop sending you alumni newsletters, magazines, and information about reunions.

### **Employers**

Next, you should contact any past employers and ask them not to send you any mail or other communication. You should be prepared for some pushback, especially if you are talking to a company where you have a retirement account or some other ongoing connection. It may be worth it to close out the account to cut the tie completely and provide yourself with some extra cash.

It is up to you how far back you go with this request. If you have been working for more than 10 years, you may not need to contact everyone – and in fact, it may raise more questions if you do than if you left it alone. A man in his mid-40s probably doesn't need to worry about contacting the local taco stand he worked for in high school.

A good rule of thumb is to contact any recent employer with whom you have had contact within the past ten years. Anything older than that –



## Delete Yourself

unless you have a retirement account, insurance policy, or some other tie that is ongoing – can safely be ignored.



### Professional Associations and Accreditations

Next, reach out to any professional associations or organizations that you might have joined, as well as any organizations that might have provided you with professional accreditation such as a license or certification.

Cancel your memberships wherever possible, and make sure to opt out of any future communication with the organization in question.

# Delete Yourself

## Memberships

The next step is to close out your memberships at any organization or entity where you have a photo ID or other information that might be linked to you. These might include:

- A gym or health center
- A country club
- The local library
- Any other organizations you may have joined

You should destroy any identification or anything else you have that might be linked to these memberships and ask the organization to delete as much of your information as they can. You may want to cite privacy or safety concerns if they ask why you want to delete your account.

## Separate your Vehicle and Address

Another thing that you need to do if you want to disappear is to make a real effort to clear the link between your home address and your driving record and any vehicles you own.

There are a couple of ways to accomplish this:

- Get a PO Box and have your communication sent there instead of to your home address.

## Delete Yourself

- Alternatively, set up a virtual mailbox in another city (not the city you are planning to live in after you disappear) and have your mail sent there and scanned. This is a classic piece of misdirection that can help you out when people try to track you down.

You need to make sure to change your address anywhere that it could be linked to your vehicle, including at the DMV (on your license and registration) as well as your automobile insurance company. This is also a good time to cancel your AAA membership if you have one.



## Hide Your Address

Finally, you want to hide your current address from as many people as possible. If you have done everything correctly, it should be very difficult for anybody to find you online or offline. You shouldn't give out your address to anybody new at this point. If you must give out an address for any reason, make it a virtual mailing address.

The step of hiding your address is especially important if you think anybody who lives there with you now might be a source of information in the search

## Delete Yourself

for you. Anybody you leave behind may be feeling angry, betrayed, or even vindictive. You want to make it as difficult as possible for anybody searching for you to get in touch with them.

Once you have followed these steps, the final step in your journey is to learn how to reboot with a new identity. That's what we'll cover next.

## Delete Yourself

### **How to Reboot with a New Identity**

Deleting yourself is one thing. However, if you don't want to be found it isn't enough to delete current information about yourself. You also have to make a real effort to become invisible. That means leaving old habits behind and creating new ones. The things that linked you to your old life, including your name, appearance, habits, and tastes, have to be left behind if you want to remain hidden. This chapter will tell you how to do that.



# Delete Yourself

## Finding New Habits and Hobbies

The first step is to break yourself of old habits and find new hobbies to enjoy. When you relocate, you have to change your profile from what it used to be. If you rooted for the Red Sox and you move to Minnesota, start rooting for the Twins. If your favorite hobby was golf, take up something new like tennis or hiking.

The same is true of creative hobbies. If you were known as a landscape painter before, then do something else to satisfy your creative urges: take a cooking class or learn to make jewelry. The more your habits and hobbies differ from the old you, the less likely it is that someone will be able to use them to find you.

## Changing Your Appearance

This might seem obvious, but you also need to change your appearance, both in terms of your face and hair and how you dress. Here are some suggestions.

- If you wore facial hair, shave it off. If you didn't, grow a beard or mustache.
- If your hair was long, crop it. If it was short, grow it out.
- If you didn't wear makeup before, start wearing it – or if you did, stop or change the style you wear.

## Delete Yourself

- Consider coloring your hair – or let it go gray if you have been coloring it.
- If you wore contacts, get glasses – and vice versa.
- Change your clothing style. If you tended to be formal, start wearing jeans and tee shirts. If you favored flannel shirts and jeans, start wearing khakis and button-down shirts.
- Gain or lose weight to further alter your appearance.
- Wear coats and hats to disguise your appearance, particularly if you are in a public place where there may be security cameras.



Basically, whatever you can do not to look like the old you, you should do. The more different you seem, the more difficult it will be for anybody to find



## Delete Yourself

you. In short, you want to do anything you can to disappear, not just in terms of deleting your name but in terms of doing anything at all that might trigger recognition on the part of someone who sees you.

### Telephone Use

One of the biggest ways people who want to disappear trip themselves up is with telephone use. Here are some things you should do:

- Use throwaway or prepaid cell phones
- Never call anybody from a landline (caller ID)
- Use the generic voice mail greeting that came with the phone
- Never answer your calls – screen everything
- Consider using an internet-based VoIP service like Skype
- Use SlyDial to make discreet phone calls if you feel that you must reach out to someone in your old life. This service works by allowing you to call and leave a voice mail without the other person's phone ringing. That means you can leave a message without having to answer uncomfortable questions.
- You can add an extra layer of protection by using a caller ID spoofing service like [SpoofMyPhone](#), which will make it impossible for anybody to get information from the phone you are using.

In general, it is best not to reach out to anybody from your former life. However, it is also important to acknowledge the possibility that you might feel compelled to do so. You're human, and deleting yourself may be



## Delete Yourself

difficult and you may be lonely. If you feel you must contact somebody, use a throwaway cell phone or email address that cannot, under any circumstances, be traced back to you or linked to your new identity in any way.

### **Grocery Shopping and Restaurants**

We already talked about habits, but food merits its own section here. Many of us are persnickety eaters, and we all have our favorite things. The chances are good that the people you are leaving behind will remember your preferences and might mention them to a skip tracer or private investigator. For that reason, you should plan on making some changes.

## Delete Yourself



- If you were accustomed to shopping at a particular grocery chain, pick a new one. If you always shopped at Kroger, avoid Kroger in your new location.
- Try new foods and change your eating habits. This may not be much of an issue if you always ate a wide variety of foods. However, if you're a picky eater, you may have to stretch yourself and try new things to cover your tracks. Even switching brands can help. If you always bought Tropicana orange juice, switch to Florida's Best or the store brand.
- Don't eat at the same chain restaurants you enjoyed in your previous life. A skip tracer will be looking for any habits that might be used to

## Delete Yourself

trace you. The last thing you want is to let a craving for TGIFriday's trip you up at the wrong time. Try someplace new.

It is particularly important to avoid strange food combinations and preferences that make you unique. Things like mixing coffee and tea together or eating your fries with mayonnaise might not seem like a big deal, but they are small, memorable details that can trip you up if you aren't careful.

### **Social Interactions**

When you first relocate, you may find that you are very lonely. It is no small thing to cut yourself off from your life, and it might be tempting to get out and socialize in your new town or city. However, you must resist the temptation – especially at first.

- Find ways to entertain yourself when you aren't working. Picking up new hobbies or working your way through the American Film Institute's top 1000 films can keep you occupied and mentally alert.
- Come up with a coherent story about where you are from so that you aren't stumbling over your words when people ask. You may need to practice it.
- Be consistent with your story. Avoid the temptation to mix things up by telling different stories to different people. You don't want to raise suspicions, and it only takes one mistake to make you appear untrustworthy or odd – either of which would also make you memorable.

## Delete Yourself

You should also avoid joining any kind of social network, offline or online. As your trail gets colder you may be able to be more social, but at first you need to do everything you can to avoid recognition or any behavior that may lead to it.

### DNA

You might be able to change many things about yourself, but your DNA isn't one of them. In fact, DNA evidence is incredibly difficult to dodge. That means that it's in your best interest to avoid leaving DNA anywhere. Here are some precautions you can take:

- Avoid leaving blood, semen, or any other bodily fluids behind
- Don't lick stamps – buy the peel-and-stick kind or use water to moisten them
- Get in the habit of wiping down surfaces – leave hotel rooms and other locations cleaner than they were when you got there
- Use rubbing alcohol – it removes the oil from fingerprints.
- Use toilet seat protectors when you go to the bathroom

Another option is to wear gloves as often as possible. You don't want to draw attention, but if you are in a situation where you will not be able to wipe fingerprints without causing a scene, consider wearing gloves and telling people you have a rash on your hands.

## Delete Yourself



### Where to Go

This topic was covered briefly earlier in the book but it bears repeating. You simply cannot afford to make a hasty decision when it comes to picking a destination for your new life. You should avoid all of the following:

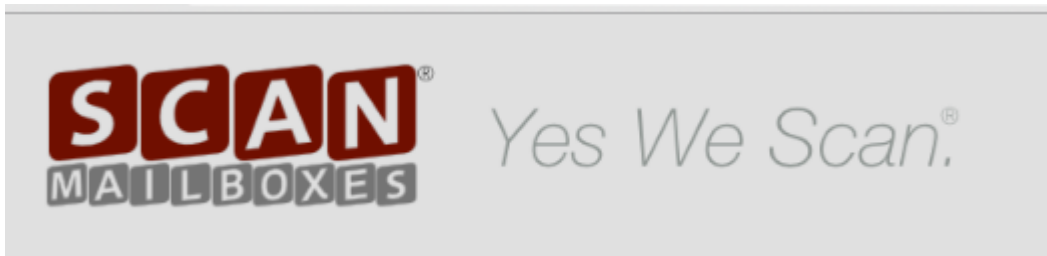
- Any city that you have talked about wanting to visit
- Any city that you have visited and liked
- Any city or town where you know somebody who lives within 100 miles

## Delete Yourself

Instead, pick someplace that you have never mentioned, or someplace that you have said that you dislike. A big city offers anonymity, but also the possibility of discovery by vacationing friends or family. Small towns are unlikely to be tourist destinations, but may also be gossip mills. You will have to weigh your options to decide the best place to go. Try to go to someplace that feels like the opposite of where people would expect to find you.

### Mail and Email

If you want to avoid discovery, the best option is to never link the mail you receive to where you live. By far the best option is to use a virtual mail service.



As mentioned previously, these services allow you to set up a mailbox in any city, even one distant from where you are, to receive mail. The service will then convert all of your mail to a digital format so you can access it online. You can even get them to scan and deposit checks for you. One service to try is [ScanMailboxes](#)



## Delete Yourself

Any email communication must be with an anonymous, throwaway email address. Make sure the address you use has no possibility of being linked to your old identity. Don't use any version of your old name, your kids' names, your pets' names, or any other identifying information. Two good services to try are [TorGuard](#) and [AnonymousEmail](#).

### Working

As mentioned before, it is very difficult to find a job without proper identification, including a Social Security Number and photo ID. It is not a good idea to pay for a fake identity. If you are leaving your old life due to abuse, you may be able to qualify for a new SSN and identification – and if you do, you can use them to get a job.

However, if you are running from creditors or have some other reason for wanting to disappear, you may not be able to qualify for a new number, and that means that you have to find a way to work off the grid. There are two main options you can try:

- Start your own cash business. There are a lot of things you can do that will enable you to earn money while staying off the radar. For example, you might start a business where you mow lawns, do landscaping, cut hair, clean houses, or anything else that you can do on a cash-only basis.
- Find work as a day laborer where you can get paid in cash for a day's work.

## Delete Yourself

You may also be able to find some work online, but you have to be careful. Many people who hire freelancers do require identification.

### **Transportation**

Finally, let's talk about what to do for transportation. You can't bring your car with you, nor can you qualify for a loan or financing without identification. That leaves you with two options:

- Take public transportation or use other options such as cabs or Ubers, and pay with cash; or
- Buy a cheap car, scooter, or motorcycle and pay with cash – and make sure that you're not buying a stolen vehicle.



## Delete Yourself



Again, the goal is to find a way to get around without attracting questions or unwanted attention. Make sure if you buy a vehicle you do it from a reputable source. Also, make sure that you obey all of the rules of the road to avoid being caught by the police.

The most important thing as you forge a new identity for yourself is to avoid anything that might link you to your former life. Keep your head low and your antennae up, and do everything you can to prevent giving yourself away. In the vast majority of cases, these precautions will be sufficient to keep you safe – and anonymous.

# Delete Yourself

## **Conclusion**

You now have all of the information you need to delete yourself and start over, but there are a few final things to consider before you begin the process.

### **How to Know if Deleting Yourself Is the Best Choice**

There is no denying that deleting yourself is an extreme step to take, and it should not be undertaken lightly. Here are some things to consider before making the leap:

- Why do you want to delete yourself? Have you spent a significant amount of time thinking about it, or is this a spur-of-the-moment decision?
- Is there some other step you could take that would solve your problem? As a rule, it is best to take the minimum logical action to solve your problem.
- Are you emotionally and mentally prepared for the fallout of deleting yourself? It is not an easy thing to walk away from your life, and you must be aware that it will be extremely difficult and possibly depressing to separate yourself from everybody and everything in your life.

If you have thought it through and you truly feel that deleting yourself is the only option, and you also feel that you are prepared to cope with any

## Delete Yourself

feelings that may arise as the result of your actions, then you can move forward.

### Other Actions to Consider

If you are not certain that you have exhausted every option, here are some things to consider before you delete yourself:



- Talk to your debtors and see if you can work out a payment plan
- Declare bankruptcy or consolidate your debt

## Delete Yourself

- Talk to law enforcement and get their protection if you are running from a stalker or abuser
- Deal with any legal problems you have head-on instead of running from them

It can be difficult to face your problems, but remember that if you decide to delete yourself, you may be making things worse instead of better. Make sure that you are doing it for the right reasons, and try everything you can before committing to the decision.

### **Tips to Stay Hidden**

Once you have made the decision to delete yourself and taken all necessary actions, there are some things to keep in mind to ensure that you maintain a low profile and avoid recognition or discovery.

- Create a coherent and consistent backstory for yourself and practice it until you are comfortable talking about it.
- Avoid reaching out to anybody in your old life, and if you do, use a VoIP service, throwaway cell phone, or anonymous email address to initiate contact.
- Use temporary emails and IDs online to avoid creating a new digital trail that you may have to erase later.
- Use a Mailboxes Etc. mailbox or (better yet) a digital mailbox to receive your mail.
- Resist the temptation to sign up for social media.



## Delete Yourself

- Don't tell anybody in your new life the truth about your old life. You may think that somebody can be trusted, but in the unlikely event that a skip tracer or PI finds them, they might feel obligated to tell the truth. It's not worth the risk.



- Don't Google your old name or that of anybody from your old life. Doing so may create a trail of breadcrumbs that somebody could follow to track you down.
- Try to stick to disposable cell phones, but if you do get a new landline, make sure it is unlisted.

Above all else, be discreet and try not to draw attention to yourself. That means staying away from your old habits, hobbies, and career. Nothing about you should resemble the old you. The more you can find ways to separate yourself from your previous life, the more likely it is that you will be able to keep yourself hidden.

## Delete Yourself

Thank you for reading *Delete Yourself*. The information in this book can help you walk away from your present life and create a whole new existence. It's not an easy thing to do, but if you follow the advice here you can escape without anybody being the wiser.

Good luck in your new life.