LifeSmarts
Learn it. Live it.

Week 12

DATA PRIVACY & DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS

Protecting Your Personal Information Online

WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Every app you download, website you visit, and post you share leaves behind a digital footprint. Most of the time you don't even notice it, but that information can influence the ads you see, the recommendations you receive, and even how companies understand your interests. Learning how your personal information is collected, shared, and protected can help you make smarter choices online. Your digital footprint is becoming part of your reputation, so it's worth taking the time to understand how to manage it.

BIG IDEAS

YOUR DATA HAS VALUE
Every time you use an app, visit a website, or make an online purchase, information about you may be collected. Understanding how companies use your data helps you make more informed choices online.

PRIVACY STARTS WITH YOU
Simple decisions, like reviewing app permissions, limiting location tracking, and sharing less personal information, can help protect your privacy and reduce unnecessary data collection.

EVERY CLICK LEAVES A TRACE
Your digital footprint is built over time through your online activities. Metadata, tracking pixels, browser fingerprinting, and other technologies can reveal more about you than you might expect.

BE A SMART DIGITAL CONSUMER
Not every company collects or uses personal information the same way. Understanding concepts like data minimization, data deletion, and data brokers helps you make informed decisions about the apps and services you choose.

KEY VOCABULARY

App Permissions: Settings that determine what information or features an app can access on your device.

Behavioral Advertising: Advertising based on a person's online activities, interests, and browsing behavior.

Browser Fingerprinting: A tracking technique that identifies a device using the unique characteristics of its web browser.

Data Broker: A company that collects, combines, and sells personal information from multiple sources.

Data Deletion: The process of removing personal information from a company's records when permitted by law.

Data Minimization: The practice of collecting only the personal information needed for a specific purpose.

Digital Fingerprinting: A method of identifying a device or user based on unique technical characteristics collected from digital activity.

Location Tracking: The collection of information about a device's geographic location over time.

Metadata: Information that describes other data, such as when, where, or how a photo, file, or message was created.

Tracking Pixel: A tiny, often invisible image or code used to collect information about online activity.

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Learn it. Live it.

Your digital footprint grows every time you use an app, visit a website, or create an online account. Taking a few minutes to review your privacy settings can help you better understand what information you're sharing and with whom.

Challenge: Choose one app or social media account you use regularly. Review its privacy settings and permissions. Look for one setting you could change to better protect your personal information or limit the amount of data you share.

Reflection: Did reviewing your privacy settings change the way you think about the information you share online?

DID YOU KNOW?

In a 2024 study, the most-visited U.S. websites shared personal data with an average of 17 advertising companies.

Source: *Privado AI, State of Website Privacy Report (2024).*

EXPLORE AND EXPLAIN

- Why is it important to understand your digital footprint before sharing information online?
- How can app permissions, cookies, and browser fingerprinting affect your online privacy?
- What steps can you take to better protect your personal information while using websites, apps, and social media?
- How can understanding data privacy help you make smarter decisions about what you share online?

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

VIDEO

Can "Anonymous" Location Data Identify You?

CBS reporters obtained location data from 1,500+ phones. See how much they could uncover about the people behind them.

ARTICLE

Who Is Selling Information About You?

Your information may be for sale without you realizing it. Find out how people-search sites build profiles about you and what you can do about it.

WEBSITE

How Much of Your Life Is Really Private?

Explore videos, articles and tips about tracking, apps, connected devices and the personal information you share online.

"Your digital footprint already exists.
The question is whether you're shaping it or someone else is."

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