

Digital Footprints:

What They Are and How to Protect Them

What Is a Digital Footprint?

A **digital footprint** is the trail of information you leave behind when using the internet and digital devices. This information can be stored, shared, and viewed by others.

Types of Digital Footprints

Active Digital Footprints

- Social media posts and comments
- Online forms and registrations
- Emails and messages
- Photos and videos you upload

Passive Digital Footprints

- Websites you visit
- Your device location data
- Online shopping history
- Cookies and tracking information collected automatically

Why Digital Footprints Matter

Your digital footprint can affect:

- Personal privacy
- Online reputation
- College admissions
- Employment opportunities
- Identity theft risk
- Targeted advertising

Potential Risks

- Oversharing personal information

- Cyberbullying or online harassment
- Identity theft and fraud
- Permanent records of inappropriate content
- Data breaches exposing personal information

Recommendations for Managing Your Digital Footprint

1. Think Before You Post

- Ask yourself if you would be comfortable with others seeing the content in the future.
- Remember that deleted content may still be recoverable.

2. Protect Personal Information

- Avoid sharing addresses, phone numbers, passwords, or financial details online.
- Limit the amount of personal information in public profiles.

3. Use Strong Security Practices

- Create strong, unique passwords.
- Enable multi-factor authentication (MFA).
- Keep devices and software updated.

4. Review Privacy Settings

- Check privacy settings on social media accounts regularly.
- Limit who can view your posts and personal information.

5. Be Careful with Links and Downloads

- Avoid clicking suspicious links.
- Download files only from trusted sources.

6. Monitor Your Online Presence

- Search for your name periodically.
- Review and remove outdated or inappropriate content when possible.

7. Respect Others Online

- Think carefully before posting information or photos of others.
- Follow ethical and responsible digital citizenship practices.

Key Takeaway

Everything you do online contributes to your digital footprint. Making informed decisions about what you share and how you protect your information helps maintain a positive, secure, and professional online presence.