

How to See What the Internet Knows About You (And How to Stop It)

By TIM HERRERA JULY 3, 2017



Welcome to the Smarter Living newsletter. Editor Tim Herrera emails readers once a week with tips and advice on living a better, more fulfilling life. [Sign up here to get it in your inbox every Monday morning.](#)

My mom (Hi mom!) isn't exactly a tech expert. We have the stereotypical boomer parent/millennial child relationship. I help her update her OS and figure out her cable bill, she cautions me about sketchy hackers stealing my identity and warns me not to open strange email attachments.

"Just because you're paranoid," she likes to joke in her motherly way, "doesn't mean they aren't out to get you." I laugh then brush it off.

But mom, I'm here to say: You were right.

The relentlessly unyielding (but highly profitable) personalization of the products and services we use is getting deeper and creepier than ever. This type of data is incredibly valuable, [we're producing a ton of it every day](#), and

it's all being used to turn us into products. As one Facebook developer [famously](#) said: "The best minds of my generation are thinking about how to make people click ads."

Let's go down this rabbit hole. Start with [this neat and medium-scary site](#), which our friends at [Gizmodo](#) flagged, that shows you everything your browser knows about you the second you open it. [Here's another one](#).

That's just your browser! Everywhere we go online we're being tracked. Facebook, which probably knows you better than you know yourself, built its business around figuring you out. [Here's how to see](#) what it knows about you. Google, too, is built on selling you to advertisers. [Here's how to see who it thinks you are](#).

Twitter? They're watching that too. [Here's how to stop it](#).

Your email? Watching it too. [Here's how to stop it](#).

Your Amazon account? Yep. [Here's how to stop it](#).

Your general internet browsing? They are watching you. [Here's how to stop it](#).

While we're at it, let's just go ahead and [lock down your whole online presence](#), and look into some [browser extensions that protect your privacy](#).

Be safe out there. They're watching.

What did I miss? How do you guard your online life? Email me at tim@nytimes.com or tweet me [@timherrera](https://twitter.com/timherrera) and let me know!

Best of Smarter Living

- [It's Mosquito Season. Here's How to Prepare](#): As mosquitoes begin to fill the air this summer, don't be afraid. Here are some tips for how to avoid the

nagging insects — and what to do if one bites you.

- [How to Protect Yourself From Ransomware Attacks](#): Some tips from computer security experts.
- [How to Photograph Fireworks Like a Pro](#): Photographers whose work has appeared regularly in The New York Times offer some advice on how to nail the perfect shot.
- [How to Buy a Home](#): Buying a house can seem like a daunting process, but with careful research and determination, the keys to that dream home can be yours. We'll help you along that path.
- [The Best TV Shows and Movies New to Netflix, Amazon and More in July](#): New movies and TV shows are added to streaming platforms each month. Here are the titles we think are most interesting in July.
- [How to Conquer the Challenge of Long-Term Travel](#): From your budget to health insurance, here is advice before heading out on a long trip.

What We're Reading

- **Money mantras** to [keep you on your budget](#).
- Make a **mistake at work**? [Here's what to do](#).
- [Plan](#) your next **road trip**.
- [Make your house look good](#) on **Airbnb**.
- How to [be a better job-seeker](#).
- **Chatty co-worker**? How to politely [put an end to it](#).
- Tips for [switching your streaming service](#).
- [Clean home, clean life](#), that's what I always say.
- To **consume less**, be [more accountable](#).
- Are you a [financial adult](#) yet?