

“At one point I thought changing my name might help with privacy, but that was before the Internet.”—OLIVIA WILDE

1. get smart

Social media, online dating, photo sharing, mobile apps, and more can make a modern girl’s social life a dream—or a nightmare. When you just want to feel connected to friends, family, and romance, the last things you want to deal with are potential dangers like identity theft, online stalking, corporate information sharing, or revenge porn. For many women, getting control of their online privacy is confusing, overwhelming, and stressful.

This book is packed with some serious self-defense moves. It’s designed to help you get organized so you can navigate the chaotic landscape of online privacy. In these pages you’ll find a guide to making sure you don’t share too much. You’ll learn how to look good to potential employers (or potential

dates) and safeguard your privacy from sleazy marketers, unethical megacorporations, scammers, stalkers, bullshit artists, and anyone who wants to silence women online. And it does all this without making you feel judged, paranoid, or like a total newbie.

Traditionally, women haven't been taught to stand up for themselves the way men have—whether online or anyplace else—but this is changing. Today, women are standing up to stalkers and being more careful than ever with personal information. We're getting fierce, angry, and strategic. We don't have time for shame, and the haters are losing. These are significant signs of much-needed changes in women's roles, especially in our role as consumers.

One of the major obstacles we face in protecting ourselves is that most social media websites are not designed to safeguard people who are targets. While there are a lot of amazing female programmers and powerful women working in the security and technology sectors, most sites and social sharing apps are designed by men who don't take into account that half the users will experience particular kinds of predatory behavior. Thus, the rules and structures of these online tools permit them to be used for evil.

In addition, the tech industry is full of corporate greed and douchebags and a whole lot of bad security practices. Most online services, such as bill-paying websites, and mobile apps are made shoddily and leak private information like there's no tomorrow. It's enough to make you wonder why every person you know hasn't had their identity stolen yet.

Privacy can be something you want just to feel safe, or you may have read horror stories about things happening to other women (maybe even your friends) and want to make sure that those things never happen to you. Maybe you're interested in being downright badass about your privacy because you've had

a bad experience—or maybe you're dealing with a privacy or reputation crisis right now.

No matter what brought you to these pages, this book will give you control and power over something that would otherwise have the power to hurt you and the people you love. And if you're reading this because you've lost control, there's good news: you're about to get your power back.

In the first two chapters, you'll find a lot of suggestions that will help you define what you want to keep private and what you're okay with sharing. Be prepared to take a few missteps as you get started—there will be a bit of a learning curve—but know that I'll give you the basics to keep what matters, like your home address, from getting into the wrong hands. Once you nail down your boundaries, determine who puts you at risk and what the risks are, and identify the bad guys, your life will feel more like an adventure from a place of freedom and power than a disaster waiting to happen.

Speaking of disasters, it's not just provocative or racy photos that can get stolen and ridiculed (or worse) to hurt you online. You don't need to be a flirt to get singled out. For someone who decides to target you, your presence is enough—if you don't protect yourself. When you protect yourself, however, you actually can post or share sexy pictures of yourself and stay in control. The key is knowing what to protect, knowing what sites and apps you can (and can't) trust, and removing from view anything that can compromise you.

You can start taking control of your private information right now. Find out what information is out there about you by searching for yourself. Searching for yourself might be daunting, even scary, and it might bring up negative feelings, but this is where you start getting tough on controlling your private property. Knowing is always better—and safer—than not knowing.

TAKE THE ONLINE PRIVACY TEST

The first step to taking control is a privacy check-up. Follow these instructions now, and don't panic if you find something online you didn't expect:

- Google your name using quotation marks, like “Anna Jones” (and be sure to check the Images tab).
- Google your phone number.
- Google your home address.
- Google your Social Security number (tax ID).
- Do a Google reverse image search of your most-recently shared photos.
- Search your own name on Spokeo, USSearch, or Intelius.

Don't blame yourself for what companies like Facebook, LinkedIn, Google, online advertising companies, and data brokers have done to your privacy. And don't panic if you see something you didn't realize was public: what's online doesn't have to stay visible forever. Along with how to prevent a privacy disaster, this book will show you how to fix some of the worst things you'll find about yourself online.

EIGHT PRIVACY TIPS TO USE RIGHT NOW

Every three months, do a privacy check-up that includes searching for your name, phone number, and address, as well as online accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, Google, and your bank. But you can take some actions immediately to make yourself safer online and, hopefully, improve what you see in those check-ups.

1. Use different email addresses for different online accounts. You can set them up to forward email to the address you actually check.

2. View your Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+ profiles as someone else, and then adjust the privacy settings.
3. Tape over your webcam.
4. Activate the password lock on your phone, laptop, and tablet.
5. Never sign in on someone else's phone, computer, or tablet.
6. Look into getting a free, Internet-based VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) phone number to use for any online communications. Don't worry—you can forward it.
7. Consider getting a post office box that you can use in place of your home address to minimize the risk of identity theft, stalking, and other dangers.
8. Install two or three antitracking plug-ins and extensions in your browser, such as Adblock Plus, Disconnect, Abine's Blur, or Ghostery.

If you want to be extra vigilant or if you have known enemies online, you can also set up a Google Custom Alert at <http://google.com/alerts/>. When you do, you'll get an email notification whenever your name, email address, or phone number is added to Google's searched sites. Note that Google Alerts sends you only the *newly* indexed results for your search since the last time it checked, not every result there is. You can set up as many alerts as you like, and enter multiple words for each search. Try to use specific search terms so you don't end up with frustratingly general results. To search for an exact phrase, put quotes around your words (like "Anna Jones"), and finish up by selecting the areas you want Google to cover (News, Blogs, and so on) and how often you want the results delivered. Once you're done, bookmark the Google Alerts page so you can go back and manage your Alerts or edit them to work better for you.