



# Best Practices for Personal Digital Security

**Last updated:** October 15, 2025

This guide is a living document created and maintained by the [Center for Civil Rights and Technology](#) at [The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights](#). Please email [techcenter@civilrights.org](mailto:techcenter@civilrights.org) with any questions, concerns, or suggestions.

**The purpose of this guide is to help people protect themselves and their data.**

This guide is for people in the United States, especially those at high risk because of who they are, where they are, or what they're doing. Most of this guide will be about **personal data**, the information about you that may be online, whether you know it or not.

## What should you do?

This guide will walk you through a step-by-step process. We'll start by identifying what level of risk feels right for you. Then we'll help you figure out where your data is and what you might want to do to protect it. Finally, we'll consider some particularly risky situations.

## Who wants your data?

Many **tech companies** want your personal data because they can use it to make money. Private companies generally want to get as much data out of you as possible: they can use it to target you with advertisements and set product pricing, they can use it to train their AI system, and they can sell it to **data brokers**, entities that buy & sell data. Many tech companies' products are not designed to protect our privacy, and their business model often conflicts with our best interests, no matter what they say.

*We're trying to change this!*  
>> [Learn more about Privacy By Design](#)

Your data is also valuable to **governments**, like the U.S. federal government, state, and local governments, and governments in other countries. Governments may want your data for many reasons, some helpful and some harmful. An example of data being helpful would be a city government counting how many kids there are in a city so that they can make sure to have enough classrooms. An example of data being harmful would be a government identifying and tracking people based on their political opinions. When you're thinking about how much data you give governments, you may want to consider both the helpful and harmful ways a government could use that data.

Finally, your personal data is valuable to **people trying to harm you**. This can include **hackers** and **scammers**, but also **stalkers** and **abusers**. If someone's trying to harm you, they'll want to gather intelligence about you, so protecting yourself is another important reason to pay attention to how your data is collected and used.

## **Where is this advice coming from?**

This guide is a collection of resources created by dozens of civil rights and technology experts. It is curated by The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. We'd especially like to thank our friends at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, the Brennan Center for Justice, the Center for American Progress (CAP), the Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT), the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC), Muslim Advocates, and UnidosUS for their contributions.

## **What if I need more help?**

Contact the **Digital Security Helpline** run by **Access Now**: they work with individuals and organizations around the world to keep them safe online. If you're at risk, they can help you improve your digital security practices to keep out of harm's way. If you're already under attack, they can provide rapid-response emergency assistance.

## **Table of Contents**

*Click on a step to jump to it:*

### **Step 1: Determine your risk level**

## **Step 2: Data that you share**

## **Step 3: Data that might be taken from you**

**Devices**

**Mobile apps**

**Websites**

## **Step 4: Protect your data**

### **High-risk situations**

**Situation: Interacting with law enforcement**

**Situation: Going to a protest**

**Situation: Crossing the border at the airport, by car, by boat, or on foot**

**Situation: Being within 100 miles of the border**

**Situation: Flying within the U.S.**

**Situation: Seeking or providing abortion care**

### **Glossary of terms**