

# How "Available" are YOU?

By Anna-Marie Stewart Venton

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Not Just Another Ezine <http://annamarketing.com>

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The internet can be pretty scary at times. Do you realise how easy it is to access your personal information? Your phone number, name, address? Even get driving instructions on how to get to your location (if you're in the USA)??

Did you know that [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) works as a telephone directory?? If you're in the USA, anybody can find you through their search engine. If you've got an unlisted number, this won't apply to you:

Go type your phone number into the search box in this format 555 444 1212 (no dashes or anything). It'll bring up your full name and address, and it'll give you 2 map links. The yahoo map will even give driving instructions on how to get to where you're at!!

There should be a telephone icon next to your listing. If you don't want to be listed, click on that and request to be removed from the service.

This one's for USA only, too:  
Free Internet Access to Public Records

Listed are over 800 state, county, city and federal (court) URL's where you can access public record information for free.

<http://www.crimescreen.com/linkspage.htm>

Don't think you're outta the woods just because you don't live in the United States. There are worldwide lists too.

Here's an example: <http://www.hansaprint.fi/eypeng.html>

This one's a combination of worldwide yellow and white pages. A lot of them will link you to maps, where anybody can see your location.

Ok, here's another one, this one is reliant on people giving accurate info though. Do you own your own registered domain? go do a "Whois" here:

<http://www.networksolutions.com/cgi-bin/whois/whois>

Brings up a lot of info, huh?

So how can you stop your personal information from getting broadcast on the web? Maybe you can't, totally, but there are a few guidelines, that if followed, will make you less "available"

Make sure your phone number is UNLISTED! A lot of online phonebooks are based on a database used by the telephone company. Which in turn leads to your address.

Use a web based email program instead of the one provided by your ISP. Your ISP provided email address should only be given to your most trusted friends and family. This is because your ISP has your address, and possibly your banking information if your are allowing them to bill you automatically.

Get some software to make your websurfing anonymous:

<http://www.anonymizer.com>

[http://www.artisoft.com/fileassurity\\_anonymizer.htm](http://www.artisoft.com/fileassurity_anonymizer.htm)

<http://www.inetprivacy.com/a4proxy/>

[http://anon.inf.tu-dresden.de/index\\_en.html](http://anon.inf.tu-dresden.de/index_en.html)

Use a firewall program if you aren't behind one already. That way the information on your computer can't be accessed by another online computer without you being prompted for permission. This site contains an excellent list of many different personal firewall programs:

<http://castor.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/pubs/security/firewalls.html>

So what if your information's already out there? What can you do about it? Well it's a long, hard job, but it CAN be done, by actually using search engines to find your personal information, and then using the remove features supplied by each particular website or writing the webmaster and requesting that he remove the info.

There you have it, you're "available" but you don't HAVE to be unless you want to.

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