



# Ready Reference D-22 Cleaning Up an Online Presence

## Cleaning Up an Online Presence

**The Google Search:** You sit down one day and decide to search your name and hometown/university or search a common photo of yourself; you are just curious about what might pop up. The results astound you. There for the world to see are: the pictures from that party freshman year, that rant you wrote sophomore year attacking the company you now want to work for, the PI you got after your 21st birthday party, and a host of terrible and embarrassing “selfies”. How on earth do you fix this so that an employer doesn’t see it?

### **Social Media Cleanup**

First things first change your privacy settings! Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram all have options to keep your profile private, so that only people you specify can see it.

Next, delete any photos of you that show you in a compromising or unprofessional light. So long duck-face selfies, party photos, and the like. If you didn’t upload the pictures then ask the friend who did to delete them for you. If they are unwilling to delete the picture, then un-tag yourself from it.

Repeat the above for any statuses/blog posts/tweets that show a bias or slant to you that you don’t want an employer to see.

In some instances it may just be easier to delete the entire profile, and then start from scratch.

### **Unflattering Information on Other Sites**

For information that has been re-blogged or uploaded onto websites out of your control you will have to contact the website administrator. You might get some push back from this as many administrators see the posting of such information as their right. Be patient and explain to them why you want the information removed. This doesn’t always work, and if they wish to keep the information public they can in some instances. If need be seek legal action to remove particularly sensitive information.

### **Court Records**

Laws on expungement and sealing of court records differ between states. For most dismissed items the process is simple, and can take place immediately. Convictions of minor misdemeanors can almost always be expunged; however, more serious convictions need to be dealt with case by case. You will need to contact the county clerk’s office where you were tried for specific directions.

### **Search Result Deletions**

In some cases you can contact a search engine (e.g. Google) and have them remove the website from their search pool. This is most commonly done for the posting of sensitive information such as your social security number.

### **Promoting the Positive**

You will not be able to remove or hide every item. In order to deal with this you need to make sure that more positive/professional results are returned when you are searched. To do this you can pay Google to promote specific links that showcase you in a positive light. Create blogs or websites geared to the industry you want to work in. LinkedIn pays Google to be the first item that comes up on a search, and Twitter pays to be the second. Use the same name to link all profiles. If any negative information comes up in the interview, just let the interviewer know that it was a unique incident and that you have changed. Give specific examples of how you overcame the issue, be it: drinking, compromising photos, or court dealings.

