



How To Conduct Your Own Free Background Checks

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“Wow!” Sandy thought as she locked the door after entering her small apartment. “That was the best date I’ve been on in 2 years.” And it was—he was witty, charming and even her dog liked him.

She probably would like to know her dream date is also a three-time check kiter.

“I don’t know, Jim,” the head of the architectural firm said to his partner, holding out the candidate’s resume at arms length. “I’ve never even heard of that second firm he listed.”

There’s a reason for that. It has never existed--in real life anyway.

Buying a four-plex was a great investment for Joanne. The tax benefits alone are proving to be very profitable. And today she signed up a middle-aged accountant who looks to be perfect for the end unit of her little building.

Joanne might change her view when she finds out the accountant is bankrupt and has skated on two leases this year alone.

We like to be trustworthy. And most people are. But people sometimes leave out critical information. Just this week residents in a small town in Idaho were stunned to find out that the man they knew for years as “Jay Shaw” was in fact a suspected Mafia hit man from Boston named Enrico M. Ponzo!

According to the National Employment Law Project, one out of three adults has a criminal record. In this report we’ll show you how you can search publicly available databases to find personal, civil and criminal information for free to protect yourself and your family.

First, we’ll look at general information on how to conduct a free background check. Next, we’ll explore specific places you can go to conduct a search on someone.

Here are some quick methods to get information on somebody for free:

Personal Approach

What is the fastest, cheapest method to uncover information? Just ask someone!

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Do you suspect your neighbor is stealing items in your yard? Ask other neighbors. Do they see anything? Can they watch for anything suspicious for you?

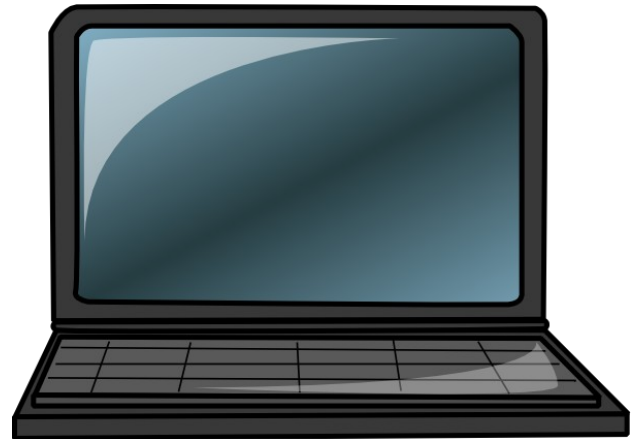
What if you have reason to believe your spouse is cheating on you? Check around. But have some finesse. Don't just go up to people and ask, "Is my wife cheating on me?" Be subtle. Talk to people who know your spouse. Talk to friends of friends. It's amazing what people will share.

Maybe you heard about a hot shot in your industry and are thinking about them as a potential hire for your company. Ask around before you even talk to them at all. Query your own employees, check with suppliers, do a little digging. By the time you have a job interview you will be well ahead of the game.

Internet Search

Probably the most common way people check out others is with a standard Google search. This will give you a snapshot of their life, usually pulling related websites, social media profiles, images, and the like.

Go a few pages deep in the search results to see if their name comes up on any consumer complaint sites like Rip Off Report. Also check Google news for any potential stories- legal or illegal. Google Images will typically pull their image from Facebook and other social media sites. It is not uncommon for someone's photo to appear in a company newsletter.



See if you can find blogs they follow or leave comments on—that will give you a world of insight into their feelings and opinions on various subjects. Likewise, you may be able to determine if they have registered any domain names which could indicate their interests or future plans.

Local

If you are interested in checking on someone locally you should head down to the county court or hall of records. They will have marriage records, property deeds, court proceedings and more. Many counties have websites you can peruse. However, be prepared to pay a small fee to pull the data.

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Now let's examine how you can do some free background checking related to work, romance, credit and crime.

On the Job

The most important part of background checks for potential employees are reference checks. Everybody knows they must provide references and often provide "references upon request."

But no one is going to provide references that are less than positive. So it becomes a little bit of a waste of everyone's time. You don't have to do it that way. In his book "Reference Checking for Everyone," Paul Barada encourages employers to put policies in place that give you more leverage.

He says to tell candidates you need to see references from three or four people they have worked with on a daily basis for a long period of time. Also try to get a variety of responsibility levels- talk to their former bosses, co-workers and even subordinates. Have candidates prepare the references so they know you will be calling and what questions you will ask.

In other words, do not just accept the references the candidate has given you. Taking these steps saves you time as the candidate will prepare more and better references for you to investigate.

Pre-employment background checks are more and more common in modern business. This is especially true for jobs that involve handling finances, law enforcement, children, and certain government jobs. Items that are checked include employment history, educational degrees, and other data.



One reason for this is that lawsuits against companies are on the rise in recent years. They cannot afford to have mentally unsound, criminally prone, or otherwise unfit people who can harm the company, its employees or customers--a wrong hire can affect company profits and reputation. Problems can escalate into lawsuits, court proceedings and possible IRS audits.

Part of the increase in pre-employment background checks stems from various court cases in the early 1990's involving company employees. At that time, the courts ruled that employers could be held responsible for any mistakes in hiring. It is called "negative hiring doctrine." If an employee attacked a customer, for example, then the company is responsible.

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The number of “red flags” on background checks proliferated with the recession. British firm Backcheck studied six industries for several months during the beginning of the current downturn. They found a significant increase in candidates overstating their qualifications, hiding criminal wrongdoing and overall “stretching the truth.”

So what is included in a typical pre-employment screening? There is a wide range: from social security number verification to a complete work history investigation. More extensive checks look at driving data, drug tests, medical information, the National Sex Offender Registry, military background, and criminal records.

Part of the FCRA (Fair Credit Reporting Act) says that employers are not allowed to use convictions that are 7 years old (or more) as any reason to deny employment. Some employers are using a little known loophole in the act. The 7 year rule only applies if a company outsources the checking itself. If the company does the work they are not bound to the rule.



If you are presented with faulty information about yourself, you have the right to correct it under the FCRA. Employers are required to provide notice to workers if they find adverse information and allow them time to correct it. The firms that provide the actual checks are not so required.

Some states allow potential employees to see the information procured about them by the company. In any case, no one can force a company to make any hire. Only the employee can decide if it is worth it to see the information.

Credit

Banks, credit card companies, and retail stores all rely on credit reports. Employers also use credit checks in their screening process.

You may ask, “What does my credit rating have to do with a job?” It is true that a person’s credit rating is a poor indicator of job performance. Credit should only be checked if a specific job requires it. For example, account executives may need company credit cards to entertain customers. Or, for people handling finances it would be prudent to run a credit screen.

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You can check your own credit any time. The FTC (Federal Trade Commission- <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/freereports.htm>) website explains your right to get your own credit report for free from all the major credit bureaus: Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion.

AnnualCreditReport.com (<http://www.annualcreditreport.com>) will pull all three and you won't have to sign up for a monthly monitoring service.

Criminal Background

Checking someone's criminal background is a little bit more involved because there is no singular national crime database for you to check. There is the National Crime Information Center but that is limited to police and some other organizations like airlines.

If you are doing your own background checks, the best strategy is to check with each county court in counties the person has lived in for the past ten years. You might even check the counties they worked in which could be different places.

Many counties have criminal records available on-line for a fee. Keep in mind the fees can add up if you are checking many county databases. Not all have on-line access. But don't just roll down to the courthouse to check--call ahead to determine official procedures. You may have to fill out specific forms and wait several days or a week or more for the information. Calculate that into your search timetable.



In the following section you'll find more resources related to criminal checks.

Relationships and Dating

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Dating has changed significantly even in the last 5 years. Online dating is growing like a weed. Right now in North America alone there are over 1400 dating sites. Of all married couples, one in eight met online. Forty million people use online dating sites and that number grows each day.

But sometimes you hear horror stories about people misrepresenting themselves online. Maybe they are married but claim to be single. Or it could be a lot worse.

Here are some ways to check the background of individuals you meet at online dating sites. You may not want to do this on a laptop at dinner in front of their face, but take time to check:

Facebook

Many people do not privatize their information on Facebook (you should do this for your own profile). Because of that, you can see their current hometown, their place of birth, high school, college, and current and past employment.

As they say, a picture tells a thousand words. If you can access their photo album you'll be able to see their coworkers, friends, vacations, pets, and more.

Pipl.com

Google works by crawling web pages other web pages link to. Pipl searches pages that search engines miss, the so called "Deep Web." We do not know the exact size of the Deep Web, but it generally estimated to be enormously bigger than the Surface Web. That's why a basic Google search seems to miss so much when trying to find information on people.

Examples of websites considered to be part of the Deep Web includes the FAA, the SEC, The Patent Office, Hoover's Business Database, and large parts of Flickr, Amazon, Hi5 and more. Pipl uses language algorithms and other rankings to pull information from member directories, scientific publications, court records, etc. Pipl is free and provides a lot of information.

County Clerk of Courts

Your county may have a different name than "County Clerk of Courts." Find where the local jurisdiction keeps the all the records for the county. Here you'll be able to search for marriage and divorce records, property deeds, lawsuits, and traffic tickets.

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State and County Dept of Corrections Offender Search

If you navigate to the USA.gov site (<http://www.usa.gov>) you can look for inmates in state correctional institutions. Click on the A-Z list of agencies and then find your state. Click through to your state's site and try to find the Inmate Locator. You may need to use the search box to

find it. Also, not all state governments offer this service. To double check, search google for your state name + "inmate locator" or "department of corrections."



Federal Court

PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records- <http://www.pacer.gov/>) gives users access to court data including Federal, District, Appellate and Bankruptcy Courts. You can use the service from the internet- you must register with the PACER Service Center (the registration, billing and technical support center). PACER is run by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts.

The cost is 8 cents per page retrieved. Be careful because this applies to search results as well as printed pages of documents. You can run up a bill in a hurry--plan out your searches!

Federal Prison Inmate Lookup

On the Federal Bureau of Prisons website (<http://www.bop.gov>) you can find the Inmate Locator- a database of all federal inmates since 1982.

National Sex Offender Registry

The U.S. Department of Justice runs the National Sex Offender Public Website (<http://www.nsopw.gov>) which offers a place to make one query of a national database of registered sex offenders. However, national searches are limited by what local jurisdictions provide. So, you'll also find links to websites for states, territories and tribes.

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County Property Appraisers Website

Wondering how much your date paid for their house? Check the county property appraiser's website. It may also be called Office of the Assessor, Audit Controller, Office of the Treasury or similar names. These sites provide property tax information, data and maps. As an example, here is the Los Angeles County website: <http://lacountypropertytax.com>.

If you know the exact address you also check Zillow (<http://www.zillow.com>) for current real estate values. Even if you just know the neighborhood it will give you a relative price range. Then again, if somebody says they live in a huge mansion I'd want to see it before I believe them!

State Division of Corporations

Your state Division of Corporations offers services for businesses and provides protections to consumers involved with business and financial transactions. You can search for any Enforcement Actions such as desist and refrain orders, civil actions, and administrative orders.

Conclusion

If you've ever been to the San Francisco Bay area, you know that public transportation is plentiful. There are over forty bus, rail and streetcar systems running through the town and connecting to the surrounding area: streetcars, BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit), commuter trains, city busses, and more. Some days you may transfer 3 times and use 4 different methods of transportation.

Searching for free background check information is like that. You can get where you are going, but you have to take a number of different vehicles and it may take a long time. Sometimes it's easier to jump in a cab and go right to your destination.

While you could do your own background check, you can see it can be exhausting, confusing, and time-consuming. Many reports from country courts charge small fees that can add up in a hurry.

[U.S. Search](#) can take all that off your hands. The "People Search" service uses advanced proprietary technology to blast through billions of pieces of data of background check information. You can specify Instant People Search, Advanced People Search, Expert-Assisted People Search, Expert-Assisted People Search Plus and even Maiden Name People Search. In short, there is a battery of data tools here to help you.

Are you running a background check for a work hire? [U.S. Search](#) offers Advanced Background Check, Expert-Assisted Background Check, Civil Background Check, Due Diligence Background Check and more.

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Before running a background check at the [U.S. Search](#) site, gather the person's name, phone number, or city and state. The magic happens when the information you enter matches some background check data. [U.S. Search's](#) powerful computers go to work and pull only the relevant data. In most cases, the results are available on-line right in front of you.

Checking criminal background? [U.S. Search](#) checks state and nationwide criminal data, civil courthouse records, tax lien information, and property data. Just think of the time and money involved in looking at courthouse records in multiple counties, pulling the data, entering credit card information over and over and over just to get the information.

It is so much easier just to go to [U.S. Search](#) and enter the data and sit back with a cup of coffee!

We confidently recommend their service. For [U.S. Search](#), this is their business. They are specialists. They have been helping consumers in the United States since 1994. Let their computers sift through billions of pieces of data in minutes. You can get the report emailed to you or you can pull it up on the screen if you prefer. Instantly.

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