

Before you graduate, know what potential employers can find out about you.

The percentage of employers performing Web searches for information about potential new hires is significant and growing. While it's pretty common knowledge that they are looking for "dirt," or things that might eliminate a candidate from a pool, they are also looking for supporting evidence for applicants, or things that will make them want to hire a person. You want them to find good things about you, and you need to know what they will see when they search.

Search for yourself on various search engines and see what comes up. Combine this search with details available on your resume to be more precise. Use Google, Bing, and Yahoo, and if you come from or plan on working in another country, use local versions of search engines. For example, www.google.de will give you the German-language version of Google, and in China www.baidu.com is popular. You can also use specialized tools like pipl.com that search a number of public records as well.

Review what is publicly available about you on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other popular social media sites you have frequented. You may find you want to remove old entries, unflattering photos, or even remove people and companies from your on-line friends lists. You may also want to change privacy settings and publish new content that may be beneficial if a potential employer does search for your information.

Set up alerts so you know if something new shows up associated with your name while you are looking for a job. You wouldn't want to be surprised if your name appears in a friend's blog post. Popular tools are [Google Alerts](#) and [Social Mention](#).

If there is material that you can't remove or that doesn't actually relate to you but instead someone with a similar name, you may want to consider enhancing your Internet presence by creating a professional website, blog, or e-portfolio. Search engines will list higher quality content earlier in a search. Google's [Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide](#) can be a good place to start learning how you might get content you want potential employers to see to appear higher in Internet search rankings.

When you are interviewed, be ready to answer questions if there is embarrassing, false, or misattributed material associated with your name on-line. You shouldn't lie in the interview; making it clear that you are honest, aware, and prepared to address such questions will serve you well.

In the meantime, use good judgment about what you do put on-line. Be aware that anything you post may reflect on you – positively or negatively – to a potential future employer.