

SPOKEO, the new social network search engine

HELPFUL WEB APP OR CYBER-STALKING TOOL?

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If you think current social medias are intrusive and possibly hazardous to your personal and professional safety, put that to rest. SPOKEO or what I call SPOOKY-O, brings a great deal of online AND offline information to one place. It pulls this information from phone directories, over 40 social networks, photo albums, marketing surveys, mailing lists, government census, real estate listings and business websites. To me it sounds extremely scary and a bit over-detailed for my taste.

You can look yourself up now at www.SPOKEO.com and possibly find a summary of you; this site is active and is posting your no-longer private information, including:

- Name
- Phone, Phone Type & Carrier
- Email Address, it's IP Address and the Exchange Server
- Home Address with a Google Map image to visually pinpoint your location and sharing property info (like how big your home is, the lot size, if there's a garage and whether or not it is attached, the number of bathrooms / floors / bedrooms, the value, how long you have lived there, the purchase date and price, if it has heating / cooling, a swimming pool, fireplace, what materials the residence is made of, etc.)
- Social Networks
- Photos (even photos that have been REMOVED from social media and online accounts like the photo center for Wal-Mart/Kodak, etc.)
- Income
- Family members in your household and their relation to you (with links to see all of their info), if you have children, etc.
- Gender
- Age
- Marital/Relationship Status
- Hobbies
- Ethnicity
- Occupation
- Zodiac
- Education
- Neighborhood Statistics & Info
- Favorites/Wish-Lists (I found mine for Amazon.com)
- Videos
- and probably more...

SPOKEO began as a tool to summarize social networking information but has expanded to cover phone books, marketing databases, business databases, web stores and other public sources of personal information, summarizing data from as many third party sites as possible.

No, it is not a perfect system. Because it is generated by machine and not verified for accuracy, the data SPOKEO collects can only be as accurate as the data people post. You may find that upon looking up your name/email/phone that they do not have the correct address or gender or age or other such data. Try searching by each of these methods; the results vary a bit in the amount of data and the accuracy of that data. SPOKEO may not have you indexed yet, but still, the abilities of SPOKEO are a bit frightening. In response to inaccurate data, SPOKEO claims that:

“Data is not guaranteed for accuracy and should not be used for employment, insurance, credit eligibility, or for any other purpose covered under the FCRA (Fair Credit Reporting Act).”

I personally doubt this comment will prevent someone from judging me for future employment, insurance, credit eligibility or other purposes. How about you?

But don't fret; they do not *give* it ALL away. But for only \$2.95 a month, you can have full and unlimited access to the personal records of over 300 million people. Not a bad price for your average cyber-stalker.

You CAN opt out of SPOKEO. On the bottom of their homepage screen, click on the tiny Privacy Tab to begin removing your listing. This only removes you from SPOKEO, however. They recommend that if you wish to remove your data from third-party data sources, you must contact them one-by-one or utilize ReputationDefender to protect your online identity from sites that sell your personal information.

Post information online carefully, no matter where you are. Data lasts FOREVER.

**Be safe and share safe online practices
with your co-workers and especially your family.**