

**SAFE BLOGGING &
ONLINE PRIVACY
MADE EASY**

introduction

There are already a few freely available guides to online privacy and safe blogging, but we at neweurasia and Transitions Online seek to provide a succinct, easy-to-understand summary for those who wish to blog anonymously.

Not even the most sophisticated guide can offer 100 percent protection, but there are steps you can take to dramatically reduce your risk of exposure and keep yourself out of unnecessary danger.

This guide seeks to provide the necessary tools to exercise your right to speak your mind freely and without fear of retribution. It is written for non-specialists in countries with restrictive governments or for those worried about keeping their identity a secret. So you don't need a computer science degree to follow the steps outlined here. There are different levels of anonymity and each individual must decide for themselves how much protection is enough.

Bert, the author of this guide, is an IT consultant with lots of practical insight into protecting one's privacy. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch with him (tech@neweurasia.net).

the essentials

Be Aware...Beware!

First, you have to be aware that everything you publish online might and – as it is available globally – WILL be read. While some may depend on the information you provide on your blog, others who disagree with, dislike, or are threatened by your writings may seek to persecute you. In some countries, bloggers have been imprisoned. Each country is different, and it is necessary to be aware how your country deals with online speech and privacy issues.

So...

Use Pseudonyms

Create a virtual identity for your online activities. No matter where or what you write, do not reveal your name, occupation, address, or anything else that could provide a clue to your identity. And if you reveal to others that you blog, do not tell them your pseudonym.

Use Anonymous Webmail Accounts

Do not write from email accounts that can be traced to your real identity. Don't use free email addresses offered by your Internet service provider (ISP) as they are linked to the billing and account informa-

tion your ISP maintains. Instead, use a web-based email service located outside the country of your activities.

There are many free web-based email services. Using MSN Hotmail or Yahoo! Mail is discouraged, as both have cooperated with repressive governments on occasion. Google's service, Gmail, provides reasonable anonymity as no personal data is required to open an account. You need an invitation for Gmail, but we have hundreds, so do not hesitate to ask for one.

When you sign up for your email account, do not give your real name, occupation, address, etc.

Write At Home, Post In Public

Write your blog posts on a computer at home or anywhere else you can spend time with guaranteed privacy – without anyone observing you and without a connection to a network or the Internet. After you finish writing, put your post on a flash drive or floppy disk and use local Internet cafes or other publicly accessible computer labs to post your content to your blog.

Note we say “cafes” and “labs.” Do not always use the same ones. Move around, and if possible do not post twice consecutively from the same location. Also, keep in mind some Internet cafes keep records of who uses their computers, so try to visit at busy times.

Do Not Save What You Write

No matter where you write your posts, be sure not to save them to the hard drive of the computer you use. Anything can be recovered from a hard drive even if deleted. Use floppy disks or flash memory to save sensitive documents as these can easily be disposed of or destroyed.

Use An Overseas Blog Host

There are many ways to publish your thoughts on the web. We encourage you to create your own blog to give yourself a platform for telling the world your thoughts.

When choosing a blogging service, consider using one hosted outside your country. This reduces the risks of authorities shutting you down and gives you more privacy protection. Remember, when choosing a blog host, look for one that requires no more information from you than a username, a password, and a title for your blog.

Change Your Passwords

Change the passwords you use to access online services at least once every three months. Remember that a good password consists of at least eight characters, small and large letters, and some numbers. For example: Khg7CK8f

ISPs, IP addresses, & proxies

Every device connected to the Internet has its own identifying number for routing data, called an IP address. When you access the Internet through your Internet service provider (ISP), you either receive a temporary IP address that lasts until you disconnect or a semi-permanent one that you have until you terminate your account with the company. Your ISP is able to keep track of the sites you visit, though whether it actually does and the amount of information collected depends on its particular policies.

Whenever you visit a website, your IP address is transmitted to the site you visit. If you are concerned with revealing your IP address and want to take steps

to make it more difficult to track where you have been on the Internet, there are various ways of doing so.

One is to follow the earlier suggestion for posting to your blog: visit sites from multiple public locations. If this is not possible, or you want to be able to protect your IP address and access blocked sites from home, the choices range from the simple things like the use of proxy servers (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anonymous_proxy) to more complex strategies like onion routing (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onion_routing). A detailed discussion of the pros and cons of each approach can be found at Reporters Without Borders (http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=15013).

links & sources

There are many other online resources describing Internet security and safe blogging with details of the various technologies and strategies you might choose.

Wikipedia:

“Internet Privacy”

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_privacy)

The Electronic Frontier Foundation:

“How to Blog Safely (About Work or Anything Else)”

(<http://www.eff.org/Privacy/Anonymity/blog-anonymously.php>)

Reporters Without Borders:

Handbook for Bloggers and Cyber-Dissidents

(http://www.rsf.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=542)

“Ensuring Your Email is Truly Private”

(http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=15014)

“How to Blog Anonymously”

(http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=15012)

“Technical Ways to Get Around Censorship”

(http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=15013)

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