

**freeinfidel**

## Atheism, civil liberties, privacy and other freedoms

- [Home](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- FreeInfidel Stores:  [Amazon.com](#)  [Amazon.co.uk](#)

### Uncover Hidden Profiles

Find friends' hidden profiles across 40+ social networks!

### The Amazing New Wallet

That Holds Everything You Need Cash CreditCards AlwaysFind ItFast&amp;Easy

Ads by Google

08 December 2007

## Taint the Data: how to quit Facebook the evil way

By: Steve

**We all know Facebook won't let you quit: you can deactivate an account, but not erase it. Many of us, who value our privacy, think this is disgraceful and arrogant. Facebook seems to think it owns us. But why worry? Just make sure all the information they have about you is false.**

1  
digg

digg it

When I first heard about, and joined, Facebook it seemed like an amusing idea - for about a week. That's about as long as it took to hook up with a bunch of old friends with whom I'd lost contact. Then the annoyances really set in - people badgering me to install applications to do things whose triviality and pointlessness make *Big Brother* seem positively constructive. Then there's the advertising. And above all, the dawning realisation that I was doing all the work to make Mark Zuckerberg rich - by providing lots of intimate details about myself that he could sell.

Facebook is a waste of bandwidth. So why not leave? The answer is, they won't let you. Your data is just too valuable to them. They can't let you go.

The profile you build about your tastes, friends, purchasing habits, activities, affiliations and lifestyle is a goldmine for marketeers (and possibly government agencies - but more of that another time). Organisations cannot get information about you that is this detailed from any other source. And you do all the work, providing the data for free.

So Facebook's value - on the stock market and to its customers (the people paying for information about you) - depends entirely on the quality of its data.

Of course, it is already awash with garbage. Even the briefest search turns up pages of people with highly dubious names - obviously fake accounts. There is, of course, no checking to ensure that what you say about yourself on Facebook is true. For all they know, those corporations so hungry for the information Facebook sells may be buying pure crap. We can help ensure that's true.

One assumes they have methods for filtering out the most obvious rubbish. For example, those accounts with truly weird names and very little activity probably go to the bottom of the pile. We can't know for sure, though: that's why I adopted this technique - which I like to call '**Tainting the Data**' - for screwing with Facebook.

First, a little more about this business of deactivating an account. If you choose this option, Facebook tells you that you can reactivate at any time simply by logging back in. There is no simple option to have them erase all your details from their databases permanently. Steven Mansour, in his post [2504 Steps to closing your Facebook](#)

account, did seem to get them to do this, though it took a lot of effort and meant emailing Facebook directly. But note how Facebook's final message simply said "We have processed your request" without actually saying - unambiguously and in writing - that the account and all the information that once resided in it had been fully erased. And how would you check?

So we have to assume there's no way of erasing that private data. Why not simply replace it? If the information Facebook has about you isn't actually about you, then it's not really invading your privacy is it?

Let's be clear: the following is an alternative to closing your Facebook account. If you still want to use it in some way - particularly if you want to keep your friends - then this isn't for you.

And another thing: this is best done slowly. Take one step at a time. That way, as you replace real data with false information, it will migrate unnoticed through Facebook's databases (including the aggregated versions) and on to its backups.

So let's start lying.

**Post links to websites in which you have not the faintest interest** - sites that are entirely irrelevant to you, maybe even in a foreign language you don't speak.

**Trawl Facebook for friends** - that is, people you don't actually know and with whom you have nothing in common. This should be as random as you can make it. Issue lots of friend requests. Do this *politely*, slowly, but regularly. Most will turn you down. Some won't. When you get an acceptance, lie about how you 'know' this person. One by one, drop your real friends - but not all at once. The relationships between people (ie, your 'known associates') is one of the most valuable items of information to Facebook, and certainly to those government organisations. By gradually mixing your fake friends with your real ones, you will create false links that will seriously screw the data.

**Change your profile details** - your sex, age, location, address, phone numbers, political and religious views (don't necessarily choose the opposite of how you think - think obliquely), education (award yourself a degree or two), workplaces, even favourite quotes, books & all that. Make sure that nothing you enter actually reflects you accurately in any way at all. And make sure that it is not consistent even with itself (eg, describe religious views as 'radical muslim' and favourite author as Sam Harris). If you've always dreamed of working for NASA, *don't* put NASA as a workplace. Maybe the IRS would be better. If you're 20 years old, don't change your date of birth to make yourself 25. Marketers just want to know if you fit in an age range. Become a pensioner. For your profile picture, find a photo of someone you've never met, who looks nothing like you, from another country and preferably of an alternate gender.

**Write notes about things that have no relevance to you.** Cutting & pasting from random websites might work, with each post contain a melange of sentences from different sites. As you add these fake notes, gradually delete your existing, real ones, until they are all gone.

**Post nonsense on your own wall.** And allow anyone to post on your wall, but gradually delete all posts from people you actually know.

**Install applications you find trivial, stupid and annoying.** If you feel that way about them, they can't fit with the real you.

**Change your contact email** to a disposable Gmail or Yahoo address. Delete your original email address.

You can see where all this is going. Your aim is to have a Facebook account filled with entirely fictitious information, but to have done so over a period of, say, six months, so that it's hard to tell where the real stuff ends and the fake information begins.

The last step, perhaps, is to change your name. This is a little trickier as Facebook insists on 'verifying' the

change. Or so it says. I requested a change of name to something that is, frankly, rather unlikely. A couple of days later, the change was made with no further enquiry from Facebook. So far, only one of my friends has noticed that I've changed my name and moved to another continent. That said, searching Facebook for my real name still turns up my profile, albeit with the new name. So the account is obviously associated with both names. We'll see if that remains the situation over the long term (I'll report back). In any case, it means that, while I might turn up in a search for my name, it won't be obvious why I'm in the search results.

Then, continue posting only fake information for another six months. Monthly additions should do, just to make the account seem alive. By this time, the fake information should have made it into the aggregated databases that Facebook sells to its customers, and on to Facebook's own backups.

Finally, once you're bored with all this, by all means deactivate the account and say goodbye to Facebook forever. You could try to get it erased completely (first, deleting *everything*, as per Steven Mansour's method). Even if Facebook hangs on to the data, they're keeping garbage.

One word of warning, though. All that original, true information you currently have on your account may not be gone forever. Even though you've replaced it, it may be somewhere in Facebook's databases.

For example, you might have originally listed your religious beliefs as "evangelical nutjob" and have now changed it to "kitten-sacrificing satanist" (though, come to think of it, from a marketing perspective those two are probably equivalent). It's entirely possible that Facebook will store both descriptions, and any others you care to add. It probably keeps everything you've ever entered. Nevertheless, the tainted data will go some way to offsetting and diluting the truthful stuff in terms of making the information useless to the people buying it (how will they know which is true?).

If you follow these instructions, and want to be part of the *Taint the Data* campaign, drop me an email at: **tainted at freeinfidel dot com** with a link to your tainted Facebook page - but *don't* do it from Facebook. That would be too easy for them to monitor.

You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

bookmarking



permalink: <http://www.freeinfidel.com/2007/12/08/taint-the-data-how-to-quit-facebook-the-evil-way/>

#### FreeInfidel recommends (Amazon.com)



[The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements \(Perennial...](#)

Eric Hoffer (Paperback - Sep 1, 2002)

**\$10.36**

The classic work on the nature of mass movements - political and religious. Why they happen, and why they're dangerous.



[The Nazis - A Warning from History](#)

Samuel West, Fritz Arit, Estera Frenkiel, Walter Fernau (DVD)

**\$27.99**

We have progressed less than you might think since the dark days of World War 2



Thomas Paine's Rights of Man: A Biography (Books That Changed the Wor...

Christopher Hitchens (Hardcover - Jul 23, 2007)

**\$13.57**

An insightful writer on one of the most important political and philosophical works in Western history

Get Widget

Privacy

amazon.com

[Trackback URI](#) | [Comments RSS](#)

## 28 Responses to 'Taint the Data: how to quit Facebook the evil way'

1. [\(1\) 8 December 2007 at 4:44 pm](#)

ben

good idea, or you could simply not have a facebook as I do. waste of time if you ask me. just use im.

2. [\(2\) 8 December 2007 at 6:33 pm](#)

Steve

Not having a Facebook account in the first place would have been preferable. It's just that, once sucked in, it's hard to get out again... ☹

3. [\(3\) 8 December 2007 at 6:50 pm](#)

1010011010

If they save all your data and corss reference it, it might be more advantageous to change your data multiple times (weekly? monthly?). It means your bad data can corrupt more datasets due to it being cross reference by every search.

4. [\(4\) 8 December 2007 at 7:10 pm](#)

Steve

Good thinking. Like the username, by the way. But wouldn't hex - 29A - be simpler?

5. [\(5\) 8 December 2007 at 8:00 pm](#)

amishengineer

Excellent post. You expanded on what I was describing here:

<http://reddit.com/info/61gwu/comments/c02jcx6>

6. [\(6\) 8 December 2007 at 8:34 pm](#)

kerray

If they're anything like banks when saving their client data, they're saving an instance of every change.

7. [\(7\) 8 December 2007 at 8:38 pm](#)

Jh

I wouldn't assume FaceBook doesn't have a history of the changes you make to your profile. It makes sense to backup your database every now and then, so I guess you're still in there somewhere ☺

8. (8) 8 December 2007 at 8:53 pm

Arik

Bad idea.

You want a facebook account. You want some true but random noise around you. You don't want to disappear or be fake, because everyone else has that same amount of noise about them. Since anonymity is no longer an option, you want to be part of the noise and be as similar to others as you can, never sticking out.

– Arik

9. (9) 8 December 2007 at 9:09 pm

modder1

seems like ur assuming they don't keep a log of stuff you delete/change etc. on your own page though.

10. (10) 8 December 2007 at 9:25 pm

Steve

Actually, if you read carefully you'll find I am assuming they log changes. But so what? That's the point of changing the data slowly. Mix the true with the false. Make it impossible to tell the difference. Drown the signal in noise.

11. (11) 8 December 2007 at 9:37 pm

modder1

that may or may not work it's a risk. certainly the best thing to do is never to sign-up for any social-networking site in the first place. while I agree your idea is a good one it certainly isn't a cure all and imo isn't worth the effort as it won't really decieve those who really care enough to know the truth.

12. (12) 8 December 2007 at 9:42 pm

Joel

Isn't it possible that they'll develop some mechanized tests for plausibility (similar to Netflix)? I think it's likely that they already have.

It's better to set up a self-consistent persona that's about 90 degrees from yourself, IMHO.

13. (13) 8 December 2007 at 9:49 pm

L.E. Roy

Do they honestly think data on a bunch of drunken broke elementary school, middle school, high school, and college kids (and those who still wish they were kids) going to do them any good?

14. [\(14\) 8 December 2007 at 10:27 pm](#)

[Support this story on Stirrdup](#)

**Taint the Data: how to quit Facebook the evil way...**

This story has been submitted to Stirrdup. Your support can help it become hot....

15. [\(15\) 9 December 2007 at 12:48 am](#)

Kosmo

You're saying I should spend 12 months to delete my facebook account? Seems like you're only playing their game to me. Hmm, waste of time- no thank you.

16. [\(16\) 9 December 2007 at 1:08 am](#)

Bob Dole

First, award yourself -800 points for being insane enough to give away ANY personal data to this shit-hole of a company in the first place.

You are all insane if you even used your real name. I already have 2 utterly bogus accounts, and they were both just used for testing.

17. [\(17\) 9 December 2007 at 2:38 am](#)

[Penguin Pete](#)

Oh, bother. The day Facebook went open to anybody, I created an account with bogus random information using a Guerilla-Mail type address, just to test it. Got right in, looked around, said, "Facebook is another Yahoo." and haven't been back.

Nice post, though. It's good to point out to the public that they do not have to give their data away to everybody who sticks out a hand for it. If more people followed that advice, there wouldn't be so much identity theft in the world.

18. [\(18\) 9 December 2007 at 2:43 am](#)

Classification Techniques

Good luck with allll that.

Let's assume you want to spend all that time and effort, do you really think that a pattern of starting to add random websites/friends/apps/you-name-it here and there wouldn't be easy to filter out? There are a myriad machine-learning and classification techniques (SVM's etc) that are good enough to be able to filter chaff user activities from real ones given a decent training set (and boy is the "real" training set large).

In fact, if any of you out there in the information extration field read this, perhaps propose a solution, it's actually an interesting but not intractable problem.

19. [\(19\) 9 December 2007 at 3:18 am](#)

[links for 2007-12-09 at The New Reader](#)

[...] Free Infidel | Taint the Data: how to quit Facebook the evil way (tags: community facebook howto information privacy tips) [...]

20. [\(20\) 9 December 2007 at 3:39 am](#)

Peter

Plan B: Violate the TOS. Post pornographic material. Link to spyware and virii. Depending on jurisdiction, illegally post copyrighted/proprietary material.

Submit a complaint to abuse. Your account ought to be deleted better.

21. [\(21\) 9 December 2007 at 5:46 am](#)

Jack

Excellent post!

I did exactly what you suggested here in September. I tried filling my Facebook account with meaningless and false data, because I knew there was no way to delete the account.

Sadly (and evil) here is what Facebook did. They “deactivated” my account, because they said that I added people who I did not really know.

I wrote to them to ask them to please reactivate the account, but they said no. My reply after that never got another response from them.

The problem is that I started adding “fake” friends before I changed my personal data. So, I think I did the steps in the wrong order. ☹

Long story short... all my personal real data is still in Facebook... and they refuse to erase or delete it.

It is well known now in in-the-know circles that Facebook is tracking people for various governmental organizations.

22. [\(22\) 9 December 2007 at 6:01 am](#)

fernando

i dont really know much about this kind of thing but whats the worst that could happen with the data they might have? would they just use it to send you some junk mail in the post or something? and 1010011010 and 29A may not be the number of the devil anymore. it could possibly be 616!

23. [\(23\) 9 December 2007 at 7:18 am](#)

[links for 2007-12-09 « Romulo Lopez Cordero](#)

[...] Free Infidel | Taint the Data: how to quit Facebook the evil way (tags: facebook privacy information tips community) [...]

24. [\(24\) 9 December 2007 at 11:09 am](#)

luke

-NEVER- give personal information on the internet [unless it is absolutely vital for legitimate transactions (with entities the real existence is verified and trusted)].

-ALWAYS- keep in mind that everything you put out on the internet is stored in huge data vaults and can be retrieved at will. Even if you forgot about it, 25 years later it will magically reappear to bite you in the ass.

-ALWAYS- maintain plausible deniability. If it's good enough for the CIA, it's good enough for you.

-NEVER EVER- admit to anything to anyone for any reason. You weren't there, you didn't see it, hear it, smell it, touched it, said it, or thought it.

Only the paranoid will survive [corollary: it's not because you're not paranoid that they're not watching you (FaceBook and other data trawling is a case in point)].

25. (25) 9 December 2007 at 12:00 pm

Julian Bond

You touched on a deeper problem here, but I think you missed it. Why stop at just Facebook? Because if you don't like what FB might do with the data or how you might be perceived due to your FB profile, shouldn't you also be tainting your Yahoo, Myspace, Orkut, Flickr, Twitter, Pownce, Jaiku, Upcoming, Dopplr, Blogger, etc etc accounts as well?

Jack(21), I find a perverse humour in a government mining Facebook data. So does the CIA have "Are you a vampire" on their fake profile page? Maybe this calls for a "Spot the Fed" application in the style of the old DefCon T-Shirts.

26. (26) 9 December 2007 at 12:21 pm

Steve

"shouldn't you also be tainting your Yahoo, Myspace, Orkut, Flickr, Twitter, Pownce, Jaiku, Upcoming, Dopplr, Blogger, etc etc accounts as well?"

I probably would if I had any such accounts!

27. (27) 13 December 2007 at 1:58 pm

Alex

I totally agree with fernando and L.E.Roy! Really what are people going to be tracking about me, that I like Christmas because I've got an advent calendar and a Christmas tree on my profile??? That I'm good at Scrabble and I like puzzles??? Well good luck with that, is all I can say to the Government Agencies spying on my obviously important profile!!!!

28. (28) 13 December 2007 at 3:30 pm

Steve

"Really what are people going to be tracking about me, that I like Christmas because I've got an advent calendar and a Christmas tree on my profile???"

It is often the most innocuous data that certain agencies find the most useful. For example, links between 'known associates'. Try googling the story of Maher Arar, who was illegally deported, imprisoned and tortured - all for once having casually met (through a friend) a person who had come to the attention of the authorities. These days, people publish and helpfully tag their encounters on Facebook, MySpace, Flickr et al.

It is not in the imagination of a few paranoids that the authorities find these sites useful. Both Lockheed



Martin and General Dynamics have stated that they are working on systems - being used for homeland defence, border control and anti-terrorism - which scour publicly accessible information on blogs, social networking sites, forums and other internet-based resources. They do this to build profiles and establish links between people, and this info is being used to target people for surveillance and investigation, to add them to no-fly lists and more.

Of course, there will always be people who are happy to be sheep....

### Comment on this article

Please note: comments on this blog are moderated. Your comment will be held in a queue until we can get a chance to review it. All comments we consider to be spam, offensive, libellous or stupid will be deleted.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="text"/>                          | Name (required)                                  |
| <input type="text"/>                          | Email address (will not be published - required) |
| <input type="text"/>                          | Website (optional)                               |
| <div></div>                                   |  |
| <input type="submit" value="Submit Comment"/> |  |

### Tell a Friend

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Your Name           | <input type="text"/>                        |
|                     | (required)                                  |
| Your Email          | <input type="text"/>                        |
|                     | (valid email required)                      |
| Your Friend's Email | <input type="text"/>                        |
|                     | (valid email required)                      |
| Message             | <div></div>                                 |
|                     | <input type="submit" value="Send Comment"/> |

*cforms* contact form by [delicious:days](#)

Categories: [Privacy](#) [civil liberties](#) [technology](#) Tags: [corruption](#), [data](#), [erase](#), [Facebook](#), [Privacy](#), [quit](#), [taint](#)