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# Doxing

**Doxing** or **doxxing** is the act of publicly providing personally identifiable information about an individual or organization, usually via the Internet and without their consent to do so.<sup>[1][2][3]</sup> Historically, the term has been used interchangeably to refer to both the aggregation of this information from public databases and social media websites (like Facebook), as well as the publication of previously private information obtained through criminal or otherwise fraudulent means (such as hacking and social engineering). The aggregation and provision of previously published material is generally a legal practice, though it may be subject to laws concerning stalking and intimidation.<sup>[4]</sup> Doxing may be carried out for reasons such as online shaming, extortion, and vigilante aid to law enforcement.<sup>[5][6]</sup> It also may be associated with hacktivism.



Hacker Lorem  
@Hacker Lorem

@Ipsum434's real name is Happy Traveler. He lives at 123 Sit Amet Avenue.



A fictional example of a doxing post on social media. In this case, the victim's personal name and address are shown.

## Etymology

"Doxing" is a neologism. It originates from a spelling alteration of the abbreviation "docs", for "documents", and refers to "compiling and releasing a dossier of personal information on someone".<sup>[7]</sup> Essentially, doxing is revealing and publicizing the records of an individual, which were previously private or difficult to obtain.

The term dox derives from the slang "dropping dox", which, according to a contributor to *Wired*, Mat Honan, was "an old-school revenge tactic that emerged from hacker culture in 1990s". Hackers operating outside the law in that era used the breach of an opponent's anonymity as a means to expose opponents to harassment or legal repercussions.<sup>[7]</sup>

Consequently, doxing often comes with a negative connotation because it can be a means of revenge via the violation of privacy.<sup>[8]</sup>

## History

The practice of publishing personal information about individuals as a form of vigilantism predates the Internet, via physical media such as newspapers and pamphlets. For example, in response to the Stamp Act 1765 in the Thirteen Colonies, radical groups such as the Sons of Liberty harassed tax collectors and those who did not comply with boycotts on British goods, by publishing their names in pamphlets and newspaper articles.<sup>[9][10]</sup>

Outside of hacker communities, the first prominent examples of doxing took place on internet discussion forums on Usenet in the late 1990s, including users circulating lists of suspected neo-Nazis.<sup>[11]</sup> Also in the late 1990s, a website called the Nuremberg Files launched, featuring the home addresses of abortion providers and language that implied website visitors should stalk and kill the people listed.<sup>[11]</sup>