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AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 1995

Updated November 2026

Paid Removal Services Compared

DeleteMe, Incogni & Optery, honestly Who should pay, who shouldn't, and what each one really does

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

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1 The Short Version

Taking your name off data-broker and people-search sites yourself is free, but it is a chore that never quite ends. That is why a handful of companies offer to do it for you for a yearly fee. This guide compares the three best-known ones — DeleteMe, Incogni, and Optery — as plainly as I can, so you can decide whether paying makes sense for you, or whether you are better off keeping your money and doing it by hand.

- DeleteMe leans on real people doing the removal work, and tends to cost the most.
- Incogni is mostly automated, which keeps the price down; it comes from the company behind a well-known online-security brand.
- Optery is automated too, shows before-and-after proof, and offers a free exposure report so you can see where you appear before you pay a cent.
- None of them removes everything, all of them charge every year, and doing it yourself for free is always an option.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> If you would rather not choose alone, this is exactly the kind of decision worth talking through with someone. There is no wrong answer, and no pressure to buy anything.

2 Why These Services Exist — and What You're Actually Buying

There are hundreds of data brokers, each with its own fiddly opt-out process, and listings reappear after you clear them. Doing it by hand is doable but repetitive, and easy to let slide. A removal service turns that chore into a subscription: you tell it who you are once, and it works through the brokers on your behalf and keeps re-checking as the months go by. You are paying mainly for time saved and for the persistence to keep at it when you would have forgotten.

What you are NOT buying is a delete button for the internet. You are buying a steady, repeated effort:

- A scan that finds where you are listed.
- Removal requests sent on your behalf.
- Regular re-checks, usually every so many weeks or months.
- A report or dashboard showing progress.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> No service can remove you from public records — property deeds, voter rolls, and court filings stay public by law. Any company promising to “erase you from the internet” completely is overselling.

3 The Three Services, Side by Side

DeleteMe is the oldest and best-known. Its distinguishing feature is that real people carry out the removals rather than software alone, which can cope better with brokers that make opting out awkward. It tends to sit at the higher end and bills yearly, so there is usually no cheap month-to-month way to try it briefly.

Incogni comes from the company behind a well-known online-security brand that many people already recognize. It is mostly automated, which keeps its price lower and its sign-up quick. The flip side of automation is that it can be less tenacious with the trickier brokers than a human would be.

Optery is automated as well, but leans hard into transparency. Before you pay a cent, its free exposure report shows you where you appear. It gives before-and-after screenshots as proof of each removal, and offers several paid tiers from a modest one up to a comprehensive one.

Service	How it works	Best for

DeleteMe	People-assisted removals, billed yearly, periodic reports	Someone who wants a human touch and does not mind paying more
Incogni	Mostly automated, generally the least expensive, yearly plan	Someone who wants help but wants to spend the least
Optery	Automated, with a free report and before-and-after screenshots	Someone who wants proof and a free look before committing

GOOD TO KNOW

Even if you never intend to pay, Optery's free exposure report is a handy way to see roughly where you are listed. Just resist any upsell until you have decided calmly.

4 How Well Do They Really Work?

The honest answer is: partly, and it varies. The limited independent testing that exists has found that even the better services remove only a portion of listings — in the range of a quarter to roughly two-thirds, depending on the service and the test. None gets everything.

That is not a reason to dismiss them. Removing even half of your listings, and keeping them down over time, is a real improvement. But it means you should not expect to pay and then find yourself invisible. Set your expectations at “steadily less exposed,” not “gone.”

WATCH OUT

Be skeptical of any single “best service” article online. Many comparison sites earn a commission when you sign up, which does not encourage caution. What matters is not the headline count of brokers covered, but whether the sites that actually show your information are covered. Cross-check a few independent sources.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> A service and your own effort are not either-or. Many people let a service handle the bulk and still remove themselves by hand from the one or two sites they care about most.

5 Should You Pay, or Do It Yourself?

There is no single winner for everyone. The right pick depends on how much you want to spend, how much proof you want to see, and whether a yearly subscription suits you at all. Here is the honest case on each side.

Paying is worth it if…

- You find the do-it-yourself process overwhelming or tedious.
- You have a safety reason to minimize your exposure and want it handled continuously.
- Your time is genuinely worth more to you than the yearly fee.
- You tried doing it yourself and kept letting the re-checks slide.

Doing it yourself is better if…

- You are comfortable following a few web steps.
- You only want the big, visible people-search sites handled — a manageable handful.
- You would rather not add another yearly subscription.
- You like knowing exactly what was done and when.

If doing it yourself is you, a companion guide walks through searching yourself and opting out of the major sites by hand. An afternoon's work, repeated twice a year, does most of what a service would.

6 Try Before You Buy

You do not have to commit blindly. There are low-risk ways to test the waters before handing over a year's fee.

1. Run Optery's free exposure report to see where you appear.
2. Look for a trial or a money-back window on any service you consider.
3. Start with a single person rather than a whole family plan.
4. Give it a couple of months, then check the progress report honestly.
5. Keep the renewal date on your calendar so it never auto-renews by surprise.

GOOD TO KNOW

The free exposure report is essentially a scan that hunts for your name across many broker sites and lists where it found you. Even on its own it is valuable — it turns a vague worry into a concrete list you can act on, whether you then pay, do the removals yourself, or simply feel reassured there is less out there than you feared.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

7 Watching the Renewal and Canceling Cleanly

Like most subscriptions, these renew automatically, and a yearly charge is easy to forget until it lands on your statement. A little planning keeps you in control of the cost: note the renewal date the day you sign up, decide each year whether it is still earning its keep, and check whether the price rose at renewal, as subscriptions often do.

WATCH OUT

Set a calendar reminder a week before any renewal. That one note is the difference between a service you chose to keep and a charge you forgot to stop.

If you decide a service is not for you, canceling should be straightforward:

1. Sign in to your account on the service's website.
2. Look in account or billing settings for a cancel or manage option.
3. Turn off automatic renewal so you are not charged again.
4. Save the confirmation email as your proof.
5. Watch your next statement to be sure the charge stopped.

Canceling does not undo the removals already done — but without ongoing re-checks, listings will drift back over time. Plan to do an occasional manual re-check to hold your ground.

8 Family Plans, and What a Service Can't Do

Privacy is rarely about protecting just one person. Most services offer plans that cover several family members for less per person than buying each separately. Covering a spouse helps, since a shared address links you — though each adult should agree, because privacy is a personal choice. If you are helping a parent from a distance, a family plan can quietly include them without their needing to manage anything, and you can receive the reports so they are not puzzled by emails.

Set honest limits now and save disappointment later. A removal service has a specific job, and there are neighboring problems it does not touch:

- It cannot remove public records like deeds, voter rolls, or court filings.
- It cannot clean up what you posted yourself on social media.
- It does not freeze your credit or protect your passwords.
- It does not stop robocalls or junk mail directly.
- It does little about advertising trackers — those live in your phone and your Google and Facebook account settings, which are free to adjust.

GOOD TO KNOW

Whatever you choose, pair it with a few free habits: search your own name twice a year, use Optery's free report as a no-cost checkup, opt out of prescreened credit offers through the free official list, and give a little less information at checkouts and sign-ups.

9 Staying Safe From the Imposters

Any popular category attracts copycats, and privacy services are no exception. A few cautions keep you with the legitimate options: stick to well-reviewed, established names and be wary of brand-new sites you have never heard of; never give a removal service your Social Security number unless you fully trust it and understand why; and be suspicious of anything advertised through a pop-up or an unsolicited email.

WATCH OUT

A “removal service” that contacts you out of the blue — especially by phone or email, claiming your information is at risk — is a classic scam setup. Legitimate services do not cold-call you.

When you read reviews, favor independent tests over affiliate-driven “best of” lists, look for reviews that admit each service's weaknesses, and be wary of a glowing write-up with a big sign-up button attached. A little skepticism serves you well here, the same as everywhere else online.

10 When a Service Is Worth It for Safety

For most people this is a convenience decision. But for some, the calculation changes. If you have a genuine reason to be hard to find, paying for continuous removal can be money well spent:

- Survivors of domestic violence or stalking who need low visibility.

- People in public-facing roles who attract unwanted attention.
- Anyone whose listing has already led to real-world trouble.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> If your situation involves threats or stalking, a removal service is only one piece. Please also involve local law enforcement and a victim-advocacy group, who can help in ways no website can.

11 The Free Path, If You Skip All Three

Many people are better off keeping their money. If you skip the services, here is how to get most of the benefit for free.

1. Search your name and note the sites that list you.
2. Opt out of each by hand, confirming by email.
3. Stop prescreened credit offers through the free official list.
4. Freeze your credit — this is the single step I would give everyone, every time.
5. Re-check twice a year, tied to a date you remember, such as your birthday and a holiday.

That routine, done calmly, puts you ahead of most people without a single subscription. A service simply automates it. And remember: the most powerful privacy steps — freezing credit, opting out of the free lists, searching yourself — cost nothing at all.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Spend money here only if it genuinely saves you worry or time you value more. Never spend it out of fear — fear is what the scary marketing is counting on. The free path works; it just asks a little of your time.

12 Reading the Reports and Holding Perspective

Once you are signed up, the service sends reports or shows a dashboard. Read them as a trend over time, not a scoreboard to perfect. “Removed” means a listing was taken down, at least for now; “in progress” means a request was sent and is pending; “found again” is normal, because listings return and get re-removed. A number that never reaches zero is expected, not a failure. Fewer listings, staying lower, is the win.

Because listings reappear, the service re-scans and re-removes on a regular cycle — typically every so many weeks or months. That quiet, repeating rhythm is the real value of a subscription, and it is exactly the part that is hardest to keep up by hand.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Privacy is not a pass-or-fail test. You do not have to choose between being perfectly hidden and giving up entirely. Every listing removed makes you a little harder to find. If all you have energy for is removing yourself from the three sites that bother you most, that is still a real and worthwhile improvement.

13 Common Questions

Which service should I pick?

Tight budget or confident with computers: do it yourself, free. Want help but want to spend the least: look hardest at the automated, budget option (Incogni). Want proof and a free look first: start with the transparent option and its free report (Optery). Want a human touch and don't mind paying more: consider the people-assisted option (DeleteMe). And whatever you pick, freeze your credit first.

Are DeleteMe, Incogni, and Optery the only choices?

No. There are smaller and cheaper tools, including some built around a one-time sweep rather than a subscription, and a few budget options have tested well against the big names. If a budget tool interests you, apply the same checklist: search

yourself first, confirm it covers the sites that list you, and know its renewal and cancel terms before you pay.

What should I confirm before I pay?

Did I search myself first to confirm I actually have a problem? Does this service cover the specific sites that list me? What is the real yearly cost, and when does it renew?

How do I cancel, and is there a refund window? Would a family plan serve us better than a single one? If a service's website makes any of these answers hard to find, that is itself an answer.

Will it stop my scam calls?

It can help, slowly. Scammers often start from the very listings these services remove, so taking your information off the easy-to-find sites means less fresh fuel over time. It is not instant and won't stop every call. Pair it with the free National Do Not Call Registry, your phone's call screening, and letting unknown numbers go to voicemail.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task.

I want to...	Do this...
See my exposure for free	Run Optery's free exposure report — it lists where your name appears, no payment needed
Spend the least for help	Look hardest at the automated, budget service (Incogni); start with one person, not a family plan
See proof of removals	Choose the transparent service (Optery) with its before-and-after screenshots
Do it free myself	Search your name, opt out by hand, freeze your credit, and re-check twice a year
Avoid a surprise charge	Note the renewal date and set a reminder a week before; turn off auto-renew if you cancel
Stay safe from fakes	Use only established names; never hand over your SSN for routine removal; ignore cold calls and pop-ups
Protect myself most	Freeze your credit first — that one step beats everything else and costs nothing
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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