BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

AN EXTENDED GUIDE · NO. 1997

Updated November 2026

Staying Off Data Brokers After You've Opted Out

Why listings come back, and the light routine that keeps them down for good

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

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

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What's Inside

Everything in this guide, with page numbers. Skip to whichever chapter answers your question right now.

The 60-Second Version 3

Why Your Information Comes Back 3

How Often These Sites Refresh 4

The Light Repeating Routine 5

Slowing the Information at the Source 6

The Public-Records Reality 7

Doing It Yourself or Paying a Service 8

The Main Paid Removal Services 9

California's Free DROP Tool 10

Catching New Listings Early 11

Your Six-Month Checkup, Step by Step 12

Common Questions 13

If You'd Like a Hand 14

Everyday Cheat Sheet 16

A Picture to Follow Along 17

A Second Look 18

A Note From Bill 18

Your Visit — and My Promise 19

THE 60-SECOND VERSION

1 The 60-Second Version

The whole idea, if you only have a minute.

Opting out of a people-search or data-broker site removes your listing today, but it rarely keeps it gone forever. These sites constantly rebuild their lists from public records, mailing lists, and each other. So a listing you removed can quietly reappear later. This is normal and expected, not something you did wrong.

- The reason: brokers refresh their data on their own schedule and do not remember that you opted out before.
- The fix: a light, repeating routine — re-check and re-opt-out about twice a year — keeps listings down.
- The shortcut: a paid service (such as DeleteMe, Incogni, or Optery) will do the chasing for you for a yearly fee, if you would rather not do it by hand.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> If you live in California, the state now offers a free tool called DROP that lets you send a single deletion request to many registered data brokers at once. It does not replace the routine entirely, but it does a lot of the heavy lifting.

The rest of this guide explains each of these calmly, so you can pick the amount of effort that fits you and then mostly forget about it.

WHY IT COMES BACK

2 Why Your Information Comes Back

The listings return because the sites are rebuilt, not because you slipped.

When you opt out of a data-broker site, you are usually removing one particular listing from one particular site on one particular day. What you are not doing — because you cannot — is changing the sources those sites draw from. Those sources keep producing fresh information about you, and the sites keep collecting it.

The two main reasons

First, new public records. Every time you register to vote, buy or sell a home, renew a license, or appear in a court or property filing, a new record is created that anyone can gather. Brokers watch for these and add them automatically.

Second, re-aggregation. Data brokers buy and sell lists from one another constantly. Even if you clear your listing from one site, another site that still has your details can feed them right back in. The information circulates, so it finds its way home again.

Where it comes back from	Example
New public records	Voter, property, court filings
Other brokers	Lists bought and resold
Marketing data	Purchases, sign-ups, surveys
Old caches	A site you missed the first time

> *Folks think the listing came back because they did something wrong. They didn't. The faucet is still running — opting out just empties the sink once.*

HOW OFTEN IT REFRESHES

3 How Often These Sites Refresh

Why a listing can be gone one month and back the next.

People often ask how fast a listing can reappear. The honest answer is that it varies by site, but it is best to assume these sites refresh their information regularly — on the order of weeks to a few months, not years. Some pull in new public records almost continuously.

This is exactly why a one-time cleanup feels so discouraging. You do the work, everything looks clear, and then a search a few months later turns up a listing or two again. Nothing has gone wrong. The site simply ran its usual update and scooped your public details back up.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because the refresh cycle is measured in months, a check-in about every six months catches most reappearances before they have been sitting out there very long. You do not need to check weekly — that would be a lot of worry for very little gain.

WATCH OUT

Be wary of any service or person who promises your information will be permanently and completely erased from the entire internet. Because of how public records and re-aggregation work, no honest service can promise that. The realistic goal is to keep your exposure low and steadily managed.

THE REPEATING ROUTINE

4 The Light Repeating Routine

The core habit that keeps listings down without taking over your life.

The single most useful thing in this whole guide is simple: treat opting out as a small, repeating chore rather than a one-time project. Twice a year is plenty for most people. Pick two dates you will remember — many folks use a birthday and a half-birthday, or the start of spring and fall.

1. Set a recurring reminder on your phone or calendar for two dates about six months apart.
2. On each date, search your own name online (first and last, and your town) to see which sites list you.
3. Write down the sites that show your information on a simple running list you keep year to year.
4. Visit each site's opt-out or removal page and submit the removal again, even for sites you cleared before.

5. Note the date you did it next to each site, so next time you can go straight down the list.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Keep your running list in one place you will find again — a note in your phone, or a single sheet of paper in a drawer. Having last time's list turns the whole job from an hour of searching into fifteen minutes of ticking down a page you already have.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> Keep the confirmation emails that removal sites send you. If a listing reappears, that record shows you opted out before, which is useful if you ever need to follow up or escalate.

SLOWING THE SOURCE

5 Slowing the Information at the Source

Every bit you keep out of circulation is one less thing to chase.

You will never shut off the flow entirely, but you can slow it. A surprising amount of the marketing data that feeds these sites comes from everyday habits that are easy to adjust. None of this is urgent, but doing a few of these means fewer listings to clean up later.

- Mailing lists: opt out of unsolicited mail and pre-approved credit offers, which put your name and address into marketing databases.
- Loyalty and rewards cards: these track and often sell your purchase history. Use them selectively, or with a secondary email.
- Sweepstakes and 'free prize' entries: these exist largely to collect and resell contact information. Skip the ones that ask for a lot of detail.
- Online forms: give the least information a form will accept, and use a secondary email for sign-ups you do not truly care about.

A simple email trick

Keep one email address for people and things that matter — your bank, your doctor, your family — and a second, free email address for stores, sign-ups, and anything that wants your details just to let you in the door. The second address soaks up the marketing world so your main one stays cleaner.

> *You cannot stop every drip, but you can stop handing them a bucket. Every list you stay off is a list that never has to be undone.*

THE PUBLIC RECORDS REALITY

6 The Public-Records Reality

What you can change, and what you honestly cannot.

It helps to be clear-eyed about one thing: some of your information is a matter of public record by law, and it is not going to disappear. Property ownership, voter registration in many states, and court filings are public on purpose, so that government stays open and accountable. Data brokers are allowed to gather these.

That does not make you helpless. The distinction worth holding in your mind is between the original record and the broker's listing. You generally cannot erase the original public record, but you can still make the broker remove its convenient, searchable listing — and keep removing it on your schedule.

- Property records: usually public; the broker's listing can still be opted out.
- Voter registration: public in many states; rules on restricting it vary by state.
- Court and license filings: generally public; the broker listing is still fair game to remove.
- The takeaway: aim to control the easy-to-search listings, not the underlying government records.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some people in genuine danger — for example, survivors of abuse — may qualify for a state address-confidentiality program that shields their real address in public records. If that describes your situation, it is worth asking your state about. For most people, the twice-a-year routine is the right tool.

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.

DIY OR PAID

7 Doing It Yourself or Paying a Service

Both are valid — it comes down to time versus money.

There are two honest paths to staying off these sites. You can do it yourself, for free, with the twice-a-year routine. Or you can pay a service that monitors the brokers and sends the removal requests for you, over and over, all year. Neither is wrong. It is a trade of your time against a yearly fee.

Path	Best for
Do it yourself	Free, you stay in control
Pay a service	Little time, steady coverage

Doing it yourself

Free, and you stay in full control. The cost is your time and the discipline to keep the reminder. For many people, especially once they have their running list, this is a perfectly manageable fifteen minutes twice a year.

Paying a service

For a yearly fee, a removal service scans dozens or hundreds of brokers, files the opt-outs, and keeps re-filing when listings return. You hand them some personal details so they can find and remove your listings. It is the set-it-and-forget-it option, and it is a reasonable choice if the manual routine feels like too much.

WATCH OUT

No service removes everything everywhere, and listings still reappear between their sweeps. Independent testers have found even the better services clear only a portion of listings within the first few months. A paid service reduces the work; it does not make the problem vanish.

THE PAID SERVICES

8 The Main Paid Removal Services

A plain look at the best-known options and roughly what they cost.

Three services come up most often: DeleteMe, Incogni, and Optery. All three work on the same idea — they find your listings across many data brokers and submit removals on your behalf, then keep watching. They differ in price, in how much they show you, and in how hands-on they are. Prices below are rough figures as of late 2026 and change often, so always confirm on each company's own site before buying.

Service	Rough price	Style
DeleteMe	~$129/yr, one person	Hands-off, report-based
Incogni	~$8/mo or less yearly	Simple, broad coverage
Optery	Free tier, paid from ~$4/mo	Shows you the exposure

A few practical notes. DeleteMe is the long-established name and leans toward doing the work quietly and sending you reports. Incogni is priced low and keeps the experience simple. Optery stands out for offering a free plan that shows you an exposure report and lets you do the opt-outs yourself, with paid tiers that take over

the work.

GOOD TO KNOW

Optery's free exposure report is useful even if you never pay. It shows you which brokers are listing you, which is a fine starting point for your own twice-a-year routine — you can see the targets without committing to anything.

WATCH OUT

Advertised prices are often introductory and can rise at renewal, and plans sometimes require a one- or two-year commitment to hit the lowest monthly rate. Read the renewal terms, not just the first-year headline, before you sign up.

> *A removal service is a bit like a lawn service. It is real work off your plate, but the grass still grows. You are paying for someone else to keep mowing, not for the lawn to stop growing.*

THE CALIFORNIA TOOL

9 California's Free DROP Tool

One request that reaches many brokers at once — for California residents.

If you are a California resident, the state now offers something genuinely helpful and free. It is called DROP, which stands for the Delete Request and Opt-out Platform, and it is run by the California Privacy Protection Agency. It grew out of a state law called the Delete Act.

The idea is wonderfully simple. Instead of visiting broker after broker, you submit one deletion request through DROP, and every data broker registered with the state is required to honor it. It does not cover every site in existence, but it covers the brokers registered in California, which is a large and growing list.

1. Confirm you are a California resident — DROP requires you to verify your California residency.
2. Go to the California Privacy Protection Agency's official DROP page and create your request.
3. Submit your deletion request once; it is then shared with the registered data brokers.
4. Registered brokers are required to delete your records and to keep honoring the request going forward.

GOOD TO KNOW

DROP launched at the start of 2026, and as of a mid-2026 state update more than 300,000 Californians had already signed up. Registered brokers became required to act on requests as of the law's compliance date in 2026.

WATCH OUT

DROP only exercises rights under California law, so it is for California residents. If you live elsewhere, you will still need the manual routine or a paid service. And even for Californians, DROP covers registered brokers — a stray people-search site may still need a direct opt-out.

CATCHING NEW LISTINGS

10

Catching New Listings Early

Simple ways to hear about a reappearance without checking constantly.

Between your twice-a-year sweeps, you do not have to wonder in the dark. A couple of free, low-effort habits will usually surface a new listing before it has been sitting out there long.

- Search your own name now and then: type your full name, and your name plus your town, into a search engine and glance at the first page or two of results.
- Set a free name alert: a service like Google Alerts can email you when your name newly appears online, so you do not have to go looking.
- Watch for the junk-mail signal: a sudden rise in junk mail or spam calls often means your details have been resold, which is a hint to do a check.

- Check after big life events: a move, a home purchase, or a new registration tends to create fresh public records, so it is a good time to look.

Keep alerts in perspective

A name alert is a convenience, not an alarm you must jump at. If one comes in, simply add that site to your running list and handle it on your next scheduled sweep, unless it is something that genuinely worries you. The point is to stay informed without living on edge.

> **TIP**
>
> If your name is common, add your town or middle initial to your searches and alerts so you are not wading through listings for other people who share your name.

YOUR SIX-MONTH CHECKUP

11 Your Six-Month Checkup, Step by Step

The exact short routine to run each time your reminder goes off.

Here is the whole routine in one place, so you can follow it start to finish when your reminder arrives. With your running list from last time, it rarely takes more than fifteen or twenty minutes.

1. Open your running list of sites and last time's dates.
2. Search your name a few ways (name, name plus town) and add any new sites you find to the list.
3. Go down the list and submit each site's opt-out or removal again, including ones you cleared before.
4. For a California resident, confirm your DROP request is still in place and covers your current details.
5. Write today's date next to each site, save any confirmation emails, and confirm your next reminder is set.
6. Close it out and let it go until next time — you are done.

GOOD TO KNOW

The first checkup is the longest because you are building the list. Every one after that is faster, because you are mostly re-submitting a list you already have. The effort goes down each time, not up.

> *The whole secret is turning a scary, endless-sounding job into a short errand you run twice a year. Small and regular beats big and never.*

COMMON QUESTIONS

12

Common Questions

The things people ask me most about staying off these sites.

If it just comes back, is opting out even worth it?

Yes. Keeping your listings down most of the time is far better than leaving them up all of the time. Think of it like weeding a garden or dusting a shelf — it does not stay done, but a home that is tended regularly is a very different place from one that is never touched at all.

Will paying a service mean I never have to think about it?

Mostly, but not entirely. A good service does the ongoing work for you, which is the main thing. It is still wise to search your own name once in a while to see how things look, since no service catches absolutely everything.

Can I get my information off the internet permanently?

Not completely, and anyone who promises that is overselling. Because public records keep being created and brokers keep sharing lists, the realistic and achievable goal is low, well-managed exposure, not total disappearance.

I do not live in California. Is there a tool like DROP for me?

Not an identical one at this time. DROP is specific to California law. In other states, your two paths remain the manual twice-a-year routine or a paid removal service. Privacy laws are changing, so it is worth staying open to new tools over time.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Whatever path you choose, the mindset that serves people best is calm consistency. A light routine you actually keep will protect you far more than an ambitious plan you abandon after a month.

A HAND IF YOU WANT ONE

13

If You'd Like a Hand

How I help folks set this up so it mostly runs itself.

Staying off data brokers is not hard, but the first time through can feel like a lot — the searching, the forms, the deciding whether to pay for a service. Many of the folks I visit just want someone to sit with them once and get it all set up, so that afterward it is a simple errand they can handle on their own.

- Build your running list of the sites that show your information, so future sweeps are quick.
- Walk through the opt-out forms together the first time, so you know exactly what to do next time.
- Set up your twice-a-year reminders and a free name alert, so the routine nudges you instead of you having to remember.
- Talk honestly about whether a paid service is worth it for your situation, with no pressure either way.
- For California residents, help you get your DROP request submitted correctly.

The goal is never to make you dependent on me. It is the opposite — to leave you with a tidy list, a calendar reminder, and the quiet confidence that you have got this handled.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you would like that kind of hand, I am glad to help. We can get the whole thing set up in one calm visit, and from then on it is yours to run — tech made simple, the way it should be.

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...
Understand why it comes back	Brokers rebuild lists from fresh public records
Set a repeat reminder	Re-check and re-opt-out twice a year
Slow it at the source	Fewer mailing lists, loyalty cards, sweepstakes
Decide DIY vs paid	A paid service chases brokers for you, for a yearly fee
Use California's tool	If you live in California, one DROP request covers many
Catch new listings	Search your own name; set a free name alert
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

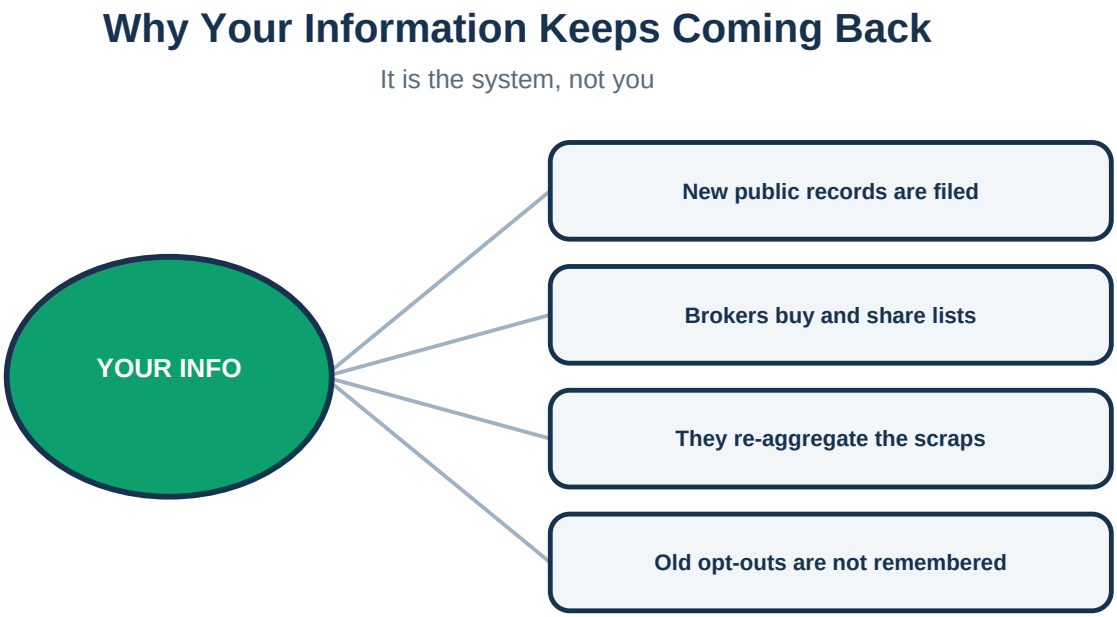


Illustration — a schematic. Set-up screens differ; each takes only a few minutes.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

The Twice-a-Year Routine

A few minutes, twice a year

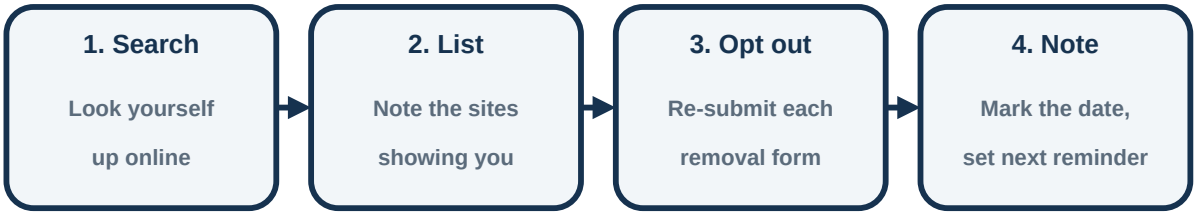


Illustration — a schematic. The order is a suggestion; do one box at a time.

A schematic of the plan — company steps vary; the order does not have to.

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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