

Name:

Communication Assignment

Plan out your communication in response to the scenarios below. Make sure to include *everything* that you would need, including greetings and salutations as well as **complete sentences**.

Write what your voicemail recording should sound like if you have placed job applications:

You are calling an employer, Joe Miller, to check on your job application. Write what you would say when someone first answers the phone:

Send a text message to your boss to thank them for taking you out to dinner. You do not need to wait for a response or end the conversation:

You need to leave a voice mail message for a college admission representative, Anna Smith to check and see if your application was received:

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ALAN HENRY on LIFEHACKER HOW-TO 11/28/12 8:00am

[How to Clean Up Your Online Presence and Make a Great First Impression](#)

Odds are someone is searching the web for you right now, or at least has looked you up fairly recently. Do you know what they learned? Better yet, do you control the pages and profiles they visited? If not, it's time to take your online reputation into your own hands instead of leaving it to Google. Here's how:

Why First Impressions Matter on the Internet

It's no secret that friends, nosy family members, and potential employers will all take to Google, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to look for more information about you when they want it. In the case of family and friends, they already know you. When it comes to potential employers or people interested in working with you, it's important to make sure that the things they find about you are representative of who you are (or who you want them to think you are.)

You don't have to be a job-seeker to understand [the importance of your online reputation](#), though. You can be a freelancer or entrepreneur who wants to control their image, or just someone who doesn't want your name dragged through the mud. It may seem like the wall of Google search results when you search your name is impossible to control, but there are some clever things you can do. In this post, we'll tackle some of them, and by the end you'll have a better picture of what people find when they search for you. With work, you'll even have better control over what they find.

Step One: Find Out Where You Stand (and Erase Embarrassments)

Before we get started, it's a good idea to see what others see when they search for you. Then we can tweak what we find so it's representative of the "you" that you want the public to see, not just what Google collects.

Search For Yourself on Google and Facebook

We'll start with Google. You've probably done a vanity Google search before, but if not, now's the time. Just log out of your Google accounts or use a browser where you're not logged in (Google personalizes results based on your account activity) and search for your name. Don't bother going more than a few pages deep, and make note of what you see. Remember, making a good first impression requires actually making an impression. While turning up nothing means no one will find anything bad, it also means they won't learn anything good about you, and that can be pretty bad too.

Next, let's check Facebook. You can view your public self on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Google+](#)

1. *Log out (or use a browser that's logged out) and search for yourself by name.* Even if you don't use your name as your account ID, it may be easy to find yourself with a quick name search. See if that's the case, and see what's visible.
2. *Log back in and view your profile "as public."* Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+ all make it easy to do this from your profile page. This way you can see what your profile looks like to someone who stumbles on you, even if you're not easily found.



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3. *Optional: Go deeper.* We've [covered how to do an even deeper dive](#) on someone before. Most people won't go to such lengths, but if you're curious, give it a try.

Clean Up Any Results You Don't Like

Now that you've seen what others see, it's time to get rid of anything you don't like. You can't trust you'll have the opportunity to explain the bad stuff away in a phone or in-person interview. We've discussed [how to fix internet embarrassments before](#). Whether the behavior is your own, someone trolled you and set up fake profiles to defame you, or someone's been [impersonating you online](#), here's how to handle it for each service:

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- **Google and Other Search Engines:** If you found the offending results at Google or another search engine, ask them to remove the pages from their results. [Google has a process for this](#), and another [for Google Images](#), but they only apply to pages that have been taken down, or old, cached versions of pages that are still up-it's not for pulling down any old page. [DuckDuckGo has a feedback form](#), as does [Bing](#), where you can submit takedown requests for non-legal reasons.
- **Facebook:** Deleting is your best option (so no one takes screenshots or makes your private posts public without you knowing.) Alternatively, change post visibility individually, or can go go to Privacy Settings > Limit Past Post Visibility to hide everything at once. Get familiar with [Facebook's privacy options](#), and if the content is on Facebook but not under your control, [we have some tips to help](#). Don't get caught [making the same mistake Lindsey Stone](#) did. Make sure private posts are truly private, the only things public are the ones that showcase your public persona, and you think before you post.

Remove a page or site from Google's search results

What do you want to do?

- [Remove content from my own site from Google's search results](#)
- [Remove content from another site from Google's search results](#)

When a page is updated or removed, it will automatically fall out of our search results. We do not do anything to make this happen.

However, if you urgently need to remove content from Google's search results (for example, if you've already removed, updated, or blocked a page accidentally disclosing confidential information), you can request removal.

- **Twitter:** Twitter is easy, just look at your profile by name. If your profile is public, everyone can see it, and if you use your real name as your handle, it's easy to find. You can [take your account private](#), but that won't stop public users from quoting you (although it does stop retweets) or responding to you publicly. Remember, Twitter is probably the most public of all networks. Think before you tweet.
- **Google+:** Your posts at Google+ aren't as important as your Google profile. Hide anything you saw but wanted private when you viewed your profile earlier. Make useful details (a contact email address, links to your portfolio or personal web site, etc) are visible. Create topical circles for sharing and [familiarize yourself with Google+'s privacy settings](#).
- **LinkedIn:** If you post articles to LinkedIn, make sure they're professional in nature and relevant to the public persona you want to put forward. While you're there, go ahead and fill out your profile with additional details: odds are your profile may be incomplete, or the last time you updated it was the last time you changed jobs.

see it. [Learn more.](#)

Tweet privacy

Protect my Tweets

If selected, only those you approve will see your Tweets. Tweets you previously may still be public.

Personalization

Tailor Twitter based on r

[Preview](#) suggestions tailored to you. [Learn more](#) about how to control your privacy.

If all else fails, you can turn to services that promise to protect your online reputation. They're usually effective, but they all cost money. For example, [previously mentioned BrandYourself](#) and [Reputation.com](#) (formerly Reputation Defender) will all help streamline this process for you.

Step Two: Beef Up Your Online Presence with Better Profiles, a Nameplate Site, and More

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Now that we've ditched the bad stuff, it's time to build up the good stuff. Potential employers, business contacts, and people you network with will look you up anyway, so why not make sure what they find is what you want them to know?

Spruce Up Your Social Networks. Your social networks can be valuable tools if you use them. Update your LinkedIn profile with your interests and skills, not just your work history. Add some relevant interests to Facebook and leave them public. You may even want to like a few job or industry-related pages, or create a Facebook page specifically for your professional persona. Upload a good-looking profile photo to your Facebook, Twitter, and Google profiles, and consider filling out your photo gallery with flattering shots of you, your work, or even your projects and things you've worked on. Use every opportunity to showcase your skills, talents and interests, whether it's in the "Likes" section of your Facebook profile, or the photos in your Instagram account. There's nothing wrong with food photos at Instagram if you're a self-described foodie, for example.

Sign up for new services that best showcase your skills. For example, if you want your indie film to get attention or you want to expand the audience of your video podcast, consider signing up for Vimeo as well as YouTube. You get access to a whole new community, and much more exposure. Are you a writer? Consider nabbing a named Tumblr account, even if you already blog at Wordpress. If you're a photographer and want to build a portfolio, consider hosting your photos at Flickr, Smugmug, and Picasa to get the most exposure and make it easy for people to find you. At the very least, you can direct visitors to the service you regularly use.

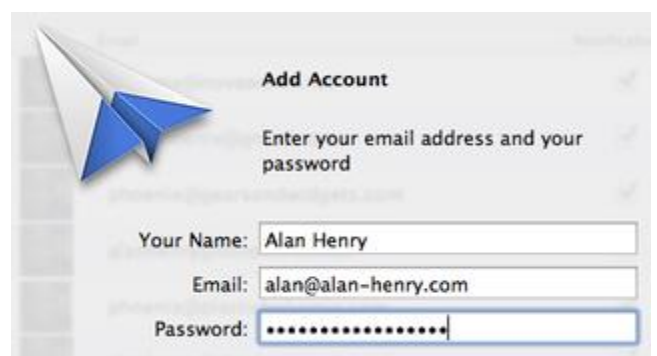
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Get a nameplate site (or several) that accurately reflects who you are. Choose the best nameplate site for the information you want to convey and sign up. For example, almost anyone can benefit from an About.me, Flavors.me, or Vizify account, but students may want to try Seelio because you can upload videos and projects that show off your skills even if you don't have a resume to speak of. Business owners with projects can use Sidengo because their template pages feature things like contact pages, maps, and document downloads for things like forms and menus. They're all free, and do a great job of linking visitors to networks you already use while conveying useful information.

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Get your own domain and use it as a portfolio and for email. Owning your own domain is extremely valuable and worth more than the money you'll pay to get it.

Before you say "all the best domains are gone," keep in mind that even if you can't get yourname.com, you should be able to get a variation on it that's close enough. If you can't use your name, pick a domain you're comfortable using as your personal banner and use that instead. Once you're registered with a great registrar, choose a great hosting company and set up shop. If you're a writer, host your own blog, or publish selected clips of your writing from other blogs. Republish yourself if you wrote something amazing elsewhere. If you're a photographer or artist, use your domain as a portfolio to showcase your work. You can even just use it as an additional nameplate site. Behind the scenes, use your



Name:

domain for email. It looks professional and every email you send is an invitation for the recipient to come and see your portfolio, full of links to the things you want them to see.

Make the most of those services. Make sure all of your profiles are filled out with as much useful information as possible. Don't just sign up and walk away. Upload a good photo of yourself to your social networks and nameplates—preferably a flattering one—so potential employers and new friends alike see you at your best. Use a consistent email address across all of those services so it's easy to get in touch with you, and cross-link them to one another frequently. This makes sure anyone who lands on one can easily get to everything else you do, and makes it easier for Google to index the real you.

Keep an eye on the results. For people who just want a good face and impression, you can stop here. For others who enjoy analyzing how people find them, most nameplate services offer analytics so you can see how people find you and where they click to leave. Add [Google Analytics](#) to your personal site and portfolio to see how well you're being received, and what people come to your site to see. This way you can keep an eye on who's looking for you and what their eyes are drawn to when they find you.

Step Three: Keep Your Best Foot Forward

By now, you've done your homework to find out what other people find when they look for you, cleaned up your profiles, and added content to the web that you control so people only see what you want them to learn about you. As you go forward with your shiny, professional online persona, make sure to keep it clean by following the fundamental rule of sharing on the internet: *don't post it if you don't want it to be public*. The internet is a big place with a long memory. [Internet Shame Insurance](#) can remind you if you're about to post something you might regret.

Keep in mind that your ideal online first impression doesn't have to be a perfect, rosy picture of your personality, just a truthful one. We [agree with XKCD on this point](#)—if putting your best foot forward keeps you from being a jerk, then great, but don't let it stifle your brilliance or keep you from expressing your opinion and being true to your ideals. After all, those are the things we want people to learn about us when they go looking.