

Passwords & Private Data Are Being Exposed Online

By TruthFinder, Thursday - October 4, 2018

I searched myself and the results left me speechless.

It seems like every month there's a new data breach that puts Americans at risk for identity theft and financial loss. Equifax, LifeLock, Facebook, and now even the Federal Government is leaking our data. Do you ever wonder if your logins or passwords are being exposed? If you're like most of us, the answer is "yes"—we worry about other people having our passwords. Unfortunately, even the most savvy computer users will fall victim to a data breach at some point—and they may not even know it.

Recently, an innovative new service made waves on the internet. [Guardian, by TruthFinder](#), can show you how much of your private data (passwords, logins, social security number, sensitive financial information, etc.) is actually being leaked online and what you can do to protect yourself.

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Here's how it works.

First, you start your search using your name and state. With this information, Guardian can look through hundreds of millions of records and piece together all of your personal data that's currently available online. You'll see things like financial records, assets, social media data, mortgage information, licenses, and other highly personal information. It's a little scary because it's the type of information that you'd use to verify your identity online (think security questions like "have you ever lived at 1234 55th Street?").

Next, Guardian will search what's known as the "Dark Web." This is the part of the internet that isn't accessible to most people unless you have special software. It's shocking that these websites even exist. In fact, this is where identity thieves buy and sell YOUR private data. Things like passwords, social security numbers, and credit card information are all traded here. **You need to monitor these dangers if you use the internet frequently. Think about what could happen if the password you use for online banking is floating around the Dark Web**(yup, bank logins are being bought and sold on the Dark Web).

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While writing this article, I was curious how the service worked and I wanted to see if any of my sensitive private information was posted online. I consider myself a savvy

computer user and I've never received a notification from any of the companies that have experienced data breaches (Equifax, Yahoo, Target, etc.) or been tricked into entering my info into a fake website. So I was confident that none of my private data was exposed.

Boy was I wrong!

I was shocked to see that the password for my Gmail account had been exposed on an ID theft forum. Not only that, but it was exposed multiple times over the years and I had no idea it had happened. I've never received a notice from any company that had experienced a data breach so I'm really glad I decided to try Guardian. Luckily, my Social Security Number and Credit Card numbers weren't found online so that was good news.

Another interesting feature that I noticed is called "Privacy Mode." By turning this on, I could hide all of my public data from other users so that no one else could see my public report. I like my privacy, so I turned that feature on and will be leaving it on permanently.

After seeing my password exposed I wanted to find out more about how this happens so I decided to go to an expert. According to S.D Edelbrock, the CTO at a top tech company, "It's VERY likely that your passwords are compromised if you tend to use the same or similar passwords for multiple sites. Everyone should stop doing this immediately". He recommended using unique passwords for each site.

I would definitely recommend [Guardian by TruthFinder](#) to my friends and family. I would have never thought that the password for my Gmail account would be floating around on the internet—but it was.

I'm glad I had Guardian to tell me about it.