

Social Media Collections for Legal Professionals: Best Practices (2025 Edition)

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

June 2025

Sharing best practices from more than 10 years of Social Media Collections

Who is Page Vault?

Page Vault specializes in full-page screen captures of web content such as social media sites like Facebook and Instagram, videos, web page, full website captures, and more.

Page Vault solutions archive web pages exactly as they appear online and preserve key metadata such as URL and date of access. Page Vault also provides eDiscovery load files, and affidavits are available for any capture.

If you're tasked to collect a relevant party's social media presence, you might wonder: what do I even need to look for and capture?

That question often leads people to Page Vault. Since 2013, we've been collecting and preserving online content for legal professionals, with social media making up a huge portion of those preservations.

This guide distills the advice we give to clients day-in and day-out into an easy to follow step-by-step guide for your own investigations and preservations. Our recommendations here are what most attorneys and investigators we work with end up needing for their matters.

This guide walks you through:

1. What you can find on each platform;
2. Key features to keep in mind when accessing the platform
3. Step-by-step instructions of what to look for and capture on each platform.

We hope you find this guide helpful. If so, please share it with your colleagues, or reach out to us at page-vault.com.



Note: Social media platforms change often! You can visit the resource page on Page Vault's website to check if you have the latest version of the guide.

Facebook: What to Know

Facebook is a platform where people can stay connected to friends and family.

Each Facebook user has a profile page containing basic information as well as a running feed (the "Timeline") of content they share, such as short text updates, photos, videos, and links to articles.

Many businesses also maintain a Facebook page with information and updates.

Do I need an account?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Most common uses

- Personal sharing of and engagement with photos and videos
- Businesses maintaining an account to update their customers or users

Common content types

- Text (no length limit)
- Photos
- Videos
- Links to articles
- Professional updates
- Short form, expiring videos ("stories")

Can users see I viewed their profile?

☐ Yes ☒ No*

*Users cannot see profile views, but can see who viewed their "stories".

What information can I see?

- The person posting can determine the privacy of each piece of content they share (posts, videos, links, etc.)
- Content shared publicly can be seen by anyone logged into Facebook
- Content shared privately is only available to those who have been accepted as "friends" of the person (see warning below!)

Other commonly used features

- Private messages with individuals and/or groups of people
- Groups for common purpose or interest
- Buy/sell products ("Marketplace")

 **Warning!** Do not request to follow a private account for the purpose of accessing information. This could be an ethics violation.

What to collect: The Timeline

The **timeline** is the main profile view of an account. This shows posts, photos, and more.

Intro

Overview of basic information:

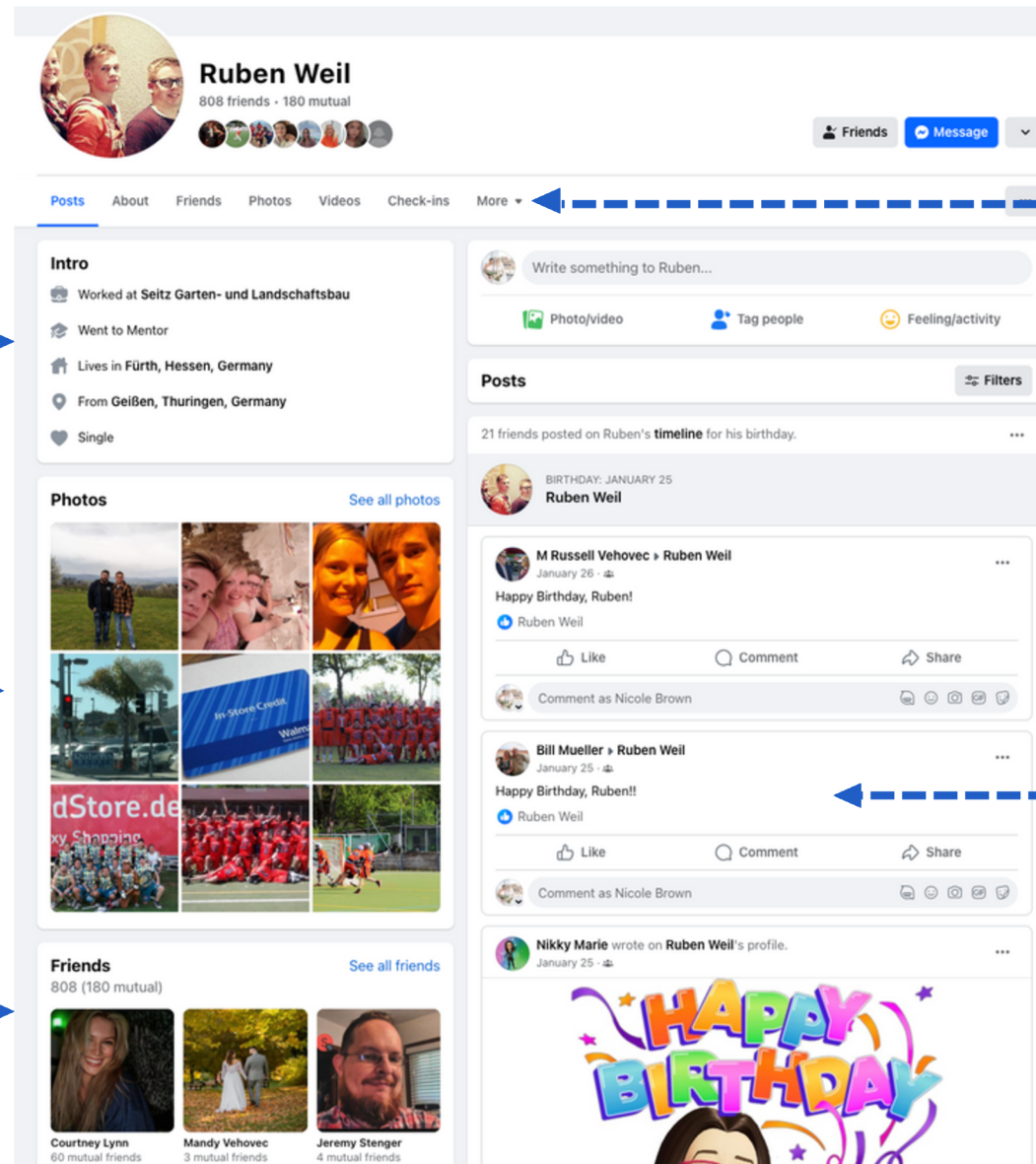
- location
- occupation
- education
- city of origin
- relationship status

Photos

This section contains a preview of photos uploaded by the user.

Friends

This section shows the friends of a user, highlighting number of mutual friends.



Other

Depending on the facts of the case, there may be other areas on Facebook that contain relevant information. Click on "More" in the navigation bar to see further options.

Posts

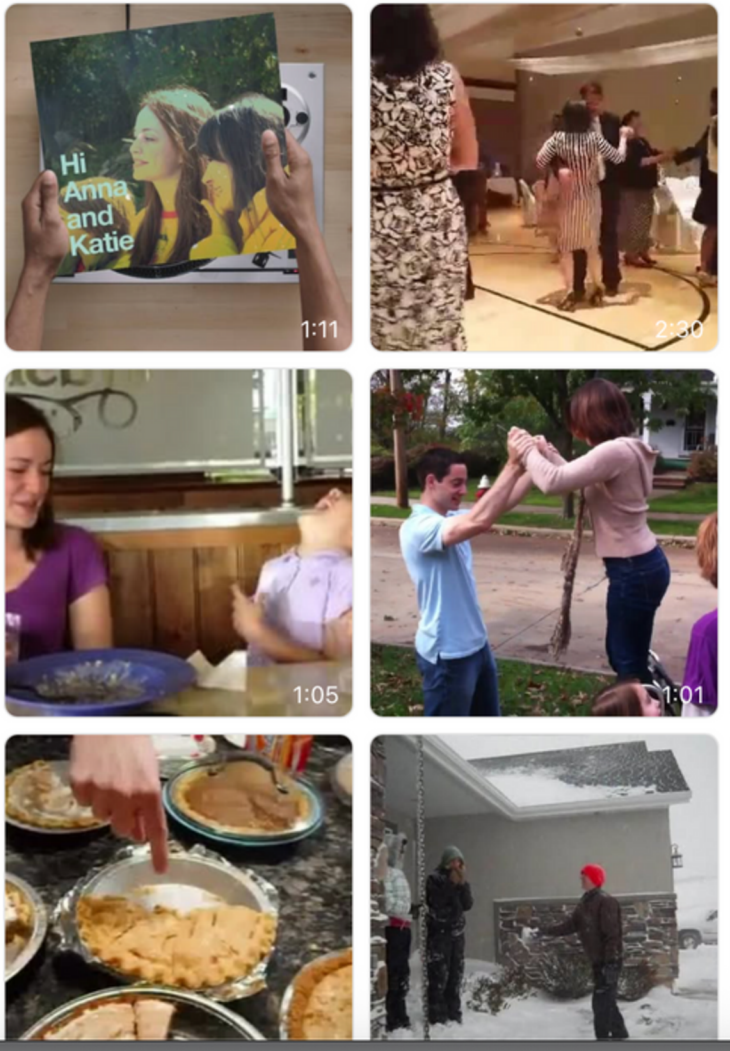
This section contains all posts by, or to the user in chronological order (most recent to oldest). This includes all media types (photos, text, videos, shared posts).



What to collect: Individual Posts, Comments, and Reactions

Videos of Katie

Katie's Videos



What to look for

Photos

Captures visible photo thumbnails, albums, and associated metadata such as captions, dates, and engagement (likes/comments) displayed on the profile.

Video

Captures playable video thumbnails, titles or descriptions, and metadata like posting date and visible reactions or comments.

About

Captures all text-based profile information including work history, education, contact details, basic info (e.g. birthday, gender), and any other visible sections under the "About" tab.

About

Overview

Work and education

Places lived

Contact and basic info

Family and relationships

Details About Katie

Life events



Instagram: What to Know

Instagram is a website that allows people and businesses to share pictures and videos with followers, usually accompanied by a text caption.

Each user has a profile page with these potential features:

1. A short, personal summary commonly called the 'bio'
2. A summary feed of all of the photos they have shared, known as 'the grid'
3. A live post that vanishes in 24 hours, indicated by a ring around the profile picture, known as the 'story'
4. A series of curated stories, both old and new, called 'highlights'

Do I need an account?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Most common uses

- Personal sharing of and engagement with photos and videos
- Businesses maintaining an account to update their customers or users

Common content types

- Photos (including multiple photos in one post, called a carousel)
- Videos
- Short form, expiring videos and images ("stories")
- Short form, looping videos ("reels")

Can users see I viewed their profile?

☐ Yes ☒ No*

*Users cannot see profile views, but can see who viewed their "stories" and "highlights"

What information can I see?

- An entire account is either public or private - you cannot have public posts for private accounts
- Content shared on public accounts can be seen by anyone logged in to instagram
- Content shared by private accounts can only be seen by approved followers (see warning below!)

Other commonly used features

- Private messages with individuals and/or groups of people



Warning! Do not request to follow a private account for the purpose of accessing information. This could be an ethics violation.



What to collect: The Grid

The grid is a summary view of the account

Stories and Live

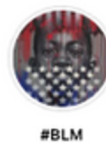
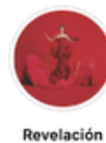
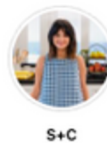
A ring around the profile picture indicates a story or Live. Stories are photos and videos that disappear within 24 hours. Lives are broadcasts that disappear once they are ended.

Highlights

are a series of curated stories that can be viewed at any time.

Highlights are often used to:

- Tell an ongoing story
- Display products in an organized fashion
- Showcase trends, topics, or campaigns



selenagomez

[Follow](#) [Message](#) [...](#)

1,974 posts 429M followers 295 following

Selena Gomez

[selenagomez](#)

Musician/band
By grace, through faith.
Founder @rarebeauty
Founder/CIO @officialwondermind
[linktr.ee/selenagomez](#)

Verified Badges

confirm that the account is authentic to the notable person or brand.

Threads Username

Threads is an app from Instagram where you can view, share, and participate in public conversations.

Bio

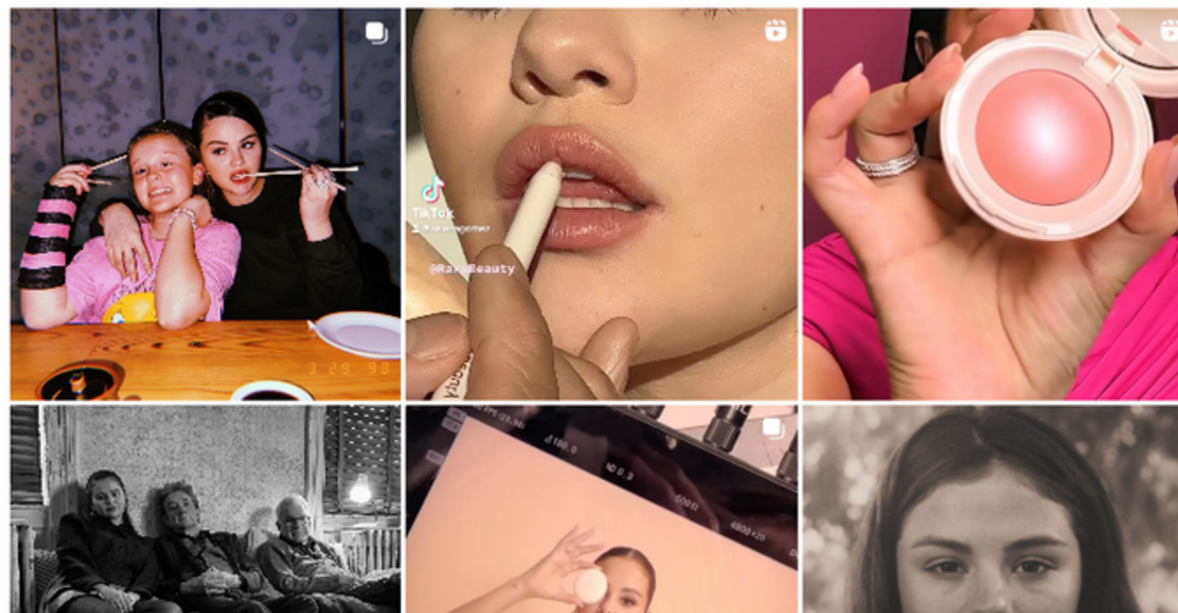
The "bio" can show information such as location, interests, occupation, supported causes, and more.

Reels

The reels tab shows all reels, or short-form videos, posted from the account.

Tagged Photos

shows photos that the user is tagged in by other users.





What to collect: Individual Posts and Comments

selenagomez









Liked by mer_holland and others

selenagomez Sissy date night

View all 14 comments

4 days ago

selenagomez









Liked by mer_holland and others

selenagomez Sissy date night

View all 14 comments

4 days ago

Comments

dominicjwest 4d

I can confirm you both also look this good on FaceTime 🥰


4,364

senaqueeniegomez_ 4d

Best sister duo 🥰🥰


4,742

tmarie247 4d

What the heck happened to her arm!


2,943

officialwondermind 4d

Sister goals ❤️


2,748

What to look for

When clicking into a post on the grid, you will open up the photo(s), video(s), comments, and likes associated to the post. Some posts may have multiple photos or a mix of photos and videos, so be sure to capture all content for the full-context of the post. If there are multiple photos within a post, all comments are associated with the post as a whole, not with each individual photo or video. Posts will also show day it was posted, any tagged friends, or a tagged location if the user chooses.

X: What to Know

X (formerly known as Twitter) is a website and platform that allows people and businesses to share videos and pictures with followers, usually accompanied by a text caption, for entertainment and marketing.

Each user has a profile page with the following features:

1. Bio: A short personal summary.
2. Content Feed: Shows the user's posts, comments, reposts, and pinned content.
3. Banner: A customizable image at the top of the profile.
4. Engagement: Displays public comments, likes, reposts, and views.

Do I need an account?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Most common uses

- Personal sharing of and engagement with text, photos, and videos
- Businesses maintaining an account to update their customers or users

Common content types

- Text posts
- Looping videos and photo grids
- Polls

A piece of text or caption of the content types is typically included with each post. This can include descriptions, opinions, instructions, or explanations of the post.

Can users see I viewed their profile?

☐ Yes ☒ No*

*Users are unable to see who viewed their profile, but are able to see the number of people who viewed their profile under "profile visits"

What information can I see?

- An entire account is either public or private - you cannot have public posts for private accounts
- Content shared on public accounts can be seen by anyone logged in to X
- Content shared by private accounts can only be seen by approved followers (see warning below!)

Other commonly used features

- Private messages with individuals and/or groups of people
- AI service named "Grok"



What to collect: The Profile

The Profile is a summary view of an account

Bio

The "bio" can show information such as interests, occupation, supported causes, and more. Since it is variable, businesses will often change their bio to support their newest products

Replies

A consolidated view of the creator's replies and original posts, often containing text, captions, and visual media.

Content in this tab can:

- Display products
- Highlight trends, topics, or campaigns
- Express opinions on events



Verified Badges

Confirms that the user is subscribed to X Premium

The Banner

The banner is used to visually personalize a profile. For businesses, it is typically for advertising content

Information

As a part of the bio, X allows users to see creators information. This sometimes includes when the creator joined, their location, business information, and email address or phone number

Post Data

Users can view the comments of other users, however, creators can limit commenting to specific people. Who has reposted, liked, or viewed the post is not able to be viewed directly



What to collect: Individual Posts and Comments



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

When clicking into a post on the grid you will open up the photo(s), video, comments, and caption to the post. Some posts may have multiple photos, so be sure to capture all content for the full-context of the post. If there are multiple photos within a post, all comments are associated with the post as a whole, not with each individual photo or video. As long as you are a follower of the account, you are able to see all individual posts. Posts will also show the day/time it was posted, the caption, a search bar at the top to view similar posts/creators, and all of its user data.

Note: X (formerly Twitter) only displays the most recent 3,200 posts and replies per account; use advanced search to access older content beyond that limit.



TikTok: What to Know

TikTok is a website and platform that allows people and businesses to share videos and pictures with followers, usually accompanied by a text caption, for entertainment and marketing.

Each user has a profile page with the following features:

1. A short, personal summary commonly called the 'bio'
2. A summary feed of all of the videos/photos they have shared, known as 'the grid'
3. A live post that vanishes in 24 hours, indicated by a ring around the profile picture, known as the 'story'
4. A series of curated posts, both old and new, called 'playlists'
5. A place for viewers to see others' reposted, favorited, and liked videos

Do I need an account?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Most common uses

- Personal entertainment, education, and/or informing or news and pop culture
- Businesses maintaining an account to update their customers or users

Common content types

- Short form, looping videos (typically less than a minute but can go up to 10 minutes long)
- Photos (including multiple photos in one post, called a slideshow)
- Short form, expiring videos and images ("stories")
- Text in the form of an image

(sounds or music can be added to all types of content)

Can users see I viewed their profile?

☒ Yes ☐ No*

*Users are able to see who viewed their profile, unless the viewer turns off "Profile View History" in settings

What information can I see?

- An entire account is either public or private - you cannot have public posts for private accounts
- Content shared on public accounts can be seen by anyone logged in to TikTok
- Content shared by private accounts can only be seen by approved followers (see warning below!)

Other commonly used features

- Private messages with individuals and/or groups of people

What to collect: The Profile

The grid is a summary view of the account

Stories and Live

A ring around the profile picture indicates a story or Live. Stories are photos and videos that disappear within 24 hours. Lives are broadcasts that disappear once they are ended.

Playlists

A collection of posts, sorted into different categories that may be viewed at any time

Playlists are often used to:

- Tell an ongoing story
- Display products in an organized fashion
- Showcase trends, topics, or campaigns

Verified Badges

confirm that the account is authentic to the notable person or brand.

Bio

The "bio" can show information such as location, interests, occupation, supported causes, and more. For businesses, it may also include links to external websites

Reposts and Liked

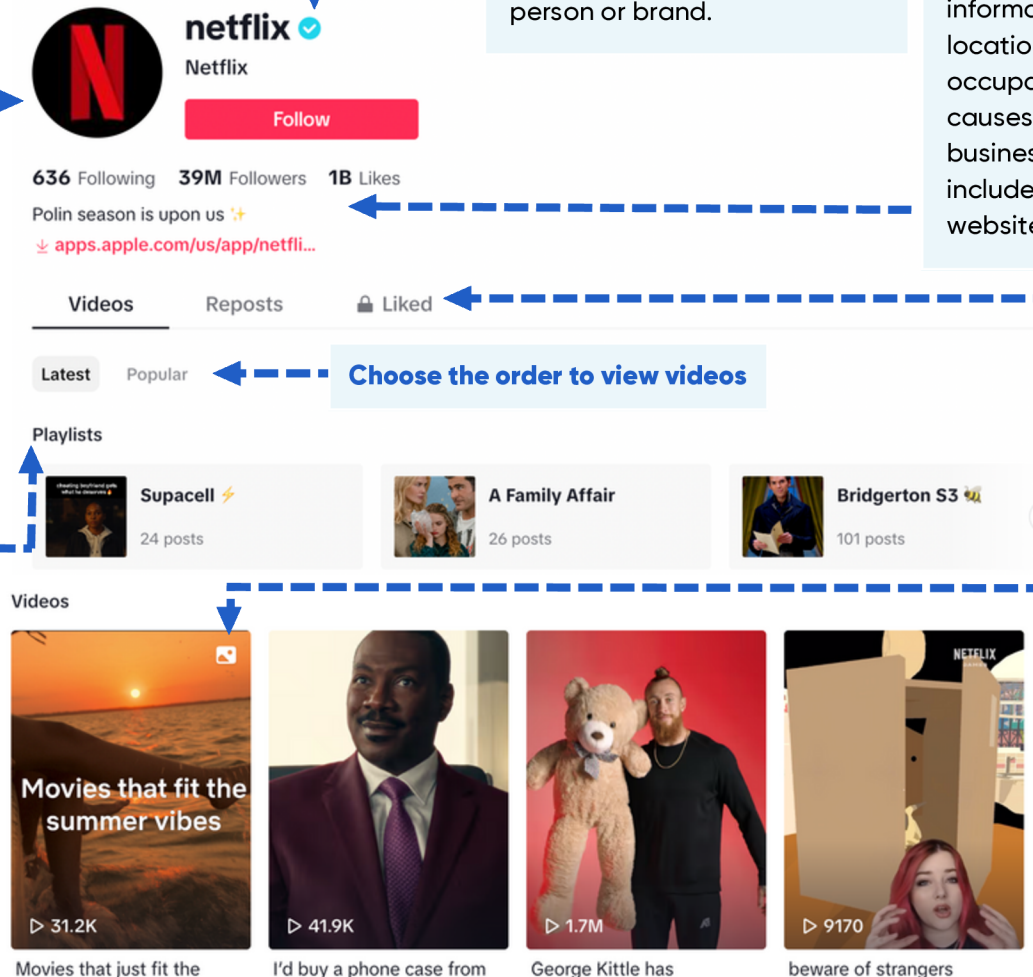
Reposts are to share other users' videos with your followers. Liked videos may be private so followers can't see what you like

Slideshow

This is indicated by the "image" icon at the top right of the panel. Swipe right on the post to see the next picture

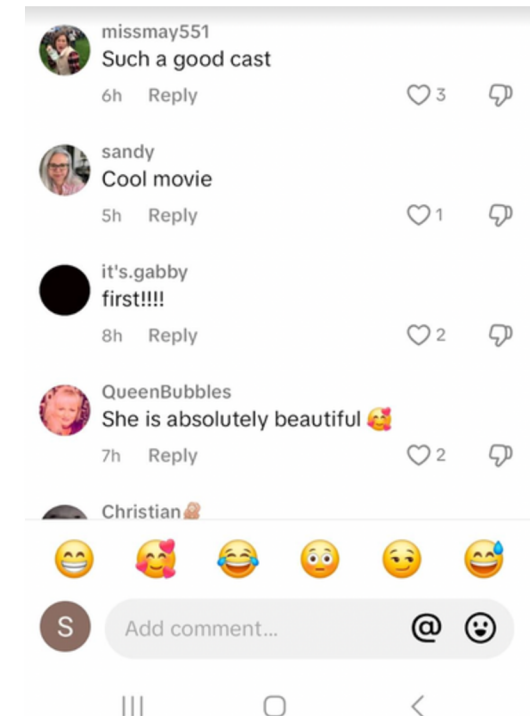
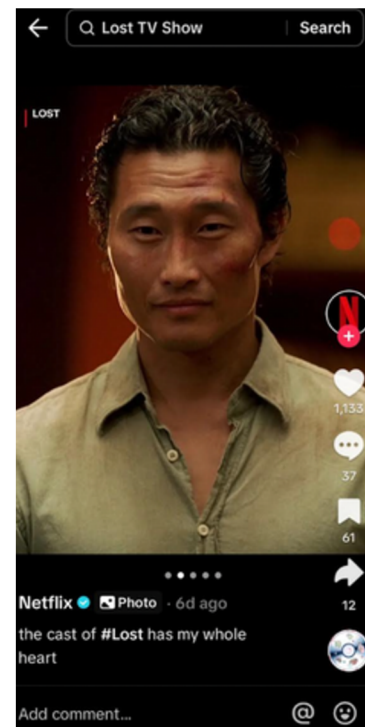
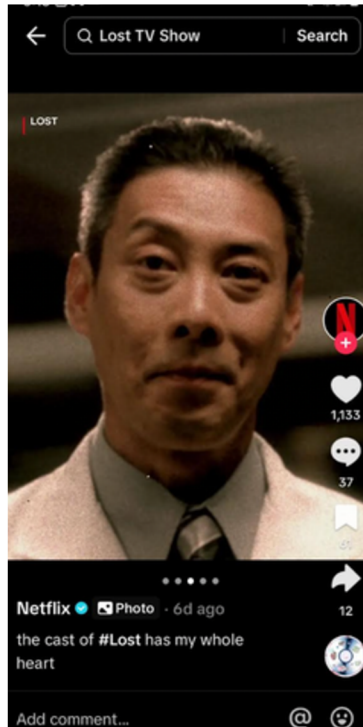
Video panel

Shows a 3 second "preview" of what the video is. Also shows how many people viewed the video and a glimpse of the caption





What to collect: Individual Videos and Comments



What to look for

When clicking into a post on the grid, you will open up the photo(s), video, comments, and caption to the post. Some posts may have multiple photos, so be sure to capture all content for the full-context of the post. If there are multiple photos within a post, all comments are associated with the post as a whole, not with each individual photo or video. As long as you are a follower of the account, you are able to see all individual posts. Posts will also show the day/time it was posted, the caption, a search bar at the top to view similar posts, and access to all of the public videos that used the same sound in the bottom right corner.

LinkedIn: What to Know

LinkedIn is a public resume and professional networking website.

Individuals create profiles that act as digital resumes to showcase their work experience, skills, and achievements. People can also write posts and comment on other's posts, share articles, join affinity groups, and apply for job opportunities posted in the jobs section.

Businesses use LinkedIn to maintain a corporate presence, share industry insights and relevant articles, build sales pipelines, and recruit prospective employees.

Do I need an account?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Most common uses

- Maintaining a public resume and engaging with your professional network
- New job opportunities and recruitment of potential candidates
- Businesses maintain an account to promote their brand, share company news, and engage with their audience.

Common content types

- Professional resume/CV, certifications, awards, or project completions
- Articles, blogs, and updates
- Engaging videos, images, and infographics (typically to highlight events, webinars, product tutorials, etc.)

Can users see I viewed their profile?

☒ Yes ☐ No*

*Users can see who viewed their profile unless the viewer changes their [Profile Viewing Options](#) to private mode.

What information can I see?

- Most content on a person's profile/resume such as job experience, education, and skills is publicly visible
- People may have additional information or activity that is only visible to those in their network or within two degrees of separation. (see warning below!)

Other commonly used features

- Private messages with individuals and/or groups of people
- Professional groups
- LinkedIn Learning

 **Warning!** Do not request to follow a private account for the purpose of accessing information. This could be an ethics violation.



What to Collect: The Timeline

These are the most common sections captured by legal professionals

Page Vault

The user's profile

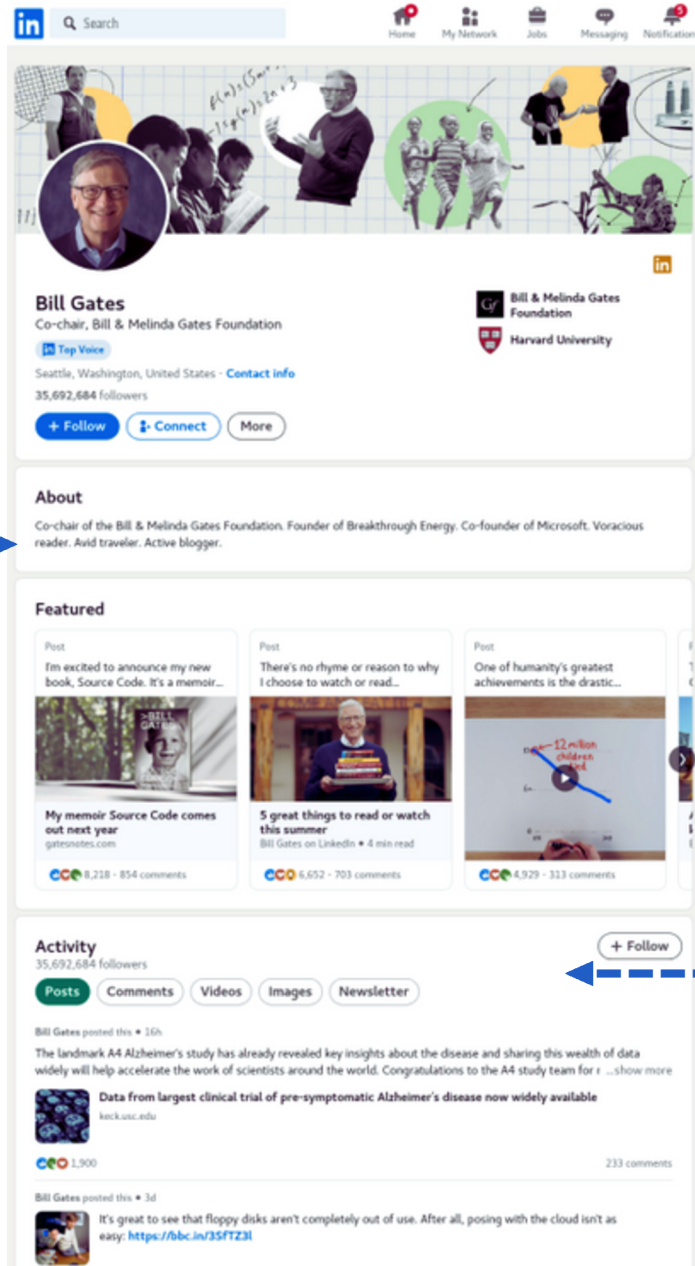
The user's profile is the centerpiece of their LinkedIn presence, featuring essential professional details.

Bio

The "bio" can show information such as the user's position title, headlines, contact information and other social media links.

About

The about section provides an short overview of the user's career highlights, professional interests, and personal branding statement.



Experience

Provides detailed job history including position titles, companies, durations, and descriptions of roles and responsibilities.

Education

Academic background including institutions attended, degrees earned, and fields of study.

Interests

Followed companies, groups, and influencers.

Activity (Case Specific)

Shows recent posts, articles shared, and other interactions on the user's profile on LinkedIn.

If you need to see all the user's activity on LinkedIn, see 'Show all posts' to expand this section.



What to collect: Posts

Activity

38,030,031 followers

+ Follow

Posts

Comments

Videos

Images

Newsletter

Documents

Bill Gates commented on a post • 1w

In his inspiring memoir, Chasing Hope, he looks back on the stories and life experiences that shaped his career—and my own. I couldn't recommend it more: <https://gatesnot.es/4mzJuoU>

Bill Gates commented on a post • 1mo

Over the next two decades, the Gates Foundation is doubling down on its vision for a more equitable world.

Bill Gates commented on a post • 1mo

Thank you, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, for the warm welcome and thoughtful discussion. From energy innovation to AI for social good, and expanding access to health and agricultural tools, I appreciated the chance to explore how Singapore can help accelerate progress in these critical areas....
...show more

What to look for

When viewing the "All Activity" section on a LinkedIn profile, you can explore different tabs—such as Posts, Comments, Images, and Videos—to target specific types of activity. Most users default to the Posts tab, but the Comments tab is especially useful for finding posts the user has interacted with via comments (which won't appear in the Posts view). Selecting these tabs allows you to capture a broader and more precise range of activity using Page Vault. Posts and comments display the timestamp, the user's job title, and their connection degree when available.



YouTube: What to Know

YouTube is a website and platform that allows people and businesses to share videos with followers, usually accompanied by a text description, for entertainment and marketing.

Each user has a profile page with the following features:

1. A short, personal summary commonly called the 'bio'
2. A summary feed of all of the videos/photos they have shared
3. A profile design feature called the banner
4. A box for the most recent video the creator has published
5. A series of curated posts, both old and new, called 'playlists'

Do I need an account?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Most common uses

- Personal sharing of and engagement with text, photos, and videos
- Businesses use YouTube to advertise and promote products or services

Common content types

- A horizontal, long-form video typically 15-40 minutes, but can go up to 12 hours long for verified accounts
- Upright, short-form, looping videos typically about 20-90 seconds long called 'shorts'
- Live videos
- Podcasts

Can users see I viewed their profile?

☐ Yes ☒ No*

What information can I see?

- An entire account is either public or private - you cannot have public posts for private accounts
 - However you can have private videos on a public account.
- Content shared on public accounts can be seen by anyone logged in to Youtube
- Content shared by private accounts can only be seen by approved followers (see warning below!)

Other commonly used features

- YouTube music
- YouTube TV
- Playables



Warning! Do not request to follow a private account for the purpose of accessing information. This could be an ethics violation.



What to collect: The Profile

Page Vault

The Profile is a summary view of an account

Verified Badges

Confirm that the account is authentic to the notable person or brand

The Banner

The banner is used to visually personalize a profile. For businesses, it is typically for advertising content

Videos

A centralized view of all videos published by the creator, typically featuring visual content with titles, descriptions, and optional captions.

Videos can:

- Display products
- Highlight trends, topics, or campaigns
- Share opinions on events

Recents

Allows viewers to see the most up to date/recent post from the creator

The screenshot shows the YouTube profile for 'The Film Theorists'. The banner image features a collage of movie and TV show characters. The profile picture is a circular logo with a film reel. The channel name 'The Film Theorists' is followed by a verified badge, subscriber count (13.1M), and video count (514). The bio reads: 'Hello Internet! Welcome to FILM THEORY! If you want to learn the secrets of your favorite ...more'. Below the bio are links to 'lumenofficial.com' and '3 more links'. A 'Subscribe' button is visible. The navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Videos', 'Shorts', 'Playlists', 'Community', and 'Store'. The 'Videos' tab is selected, showing a video titled 'Film Theory: Who REALLY Belongs on the Iron Throne? (House of the Dragon)'. The video description includes a link to 'gotl.onelink.me/W7zw/tft' and mentions 'Game of Thrones Legends'. Below the video are several 'TV Theories' thumbnails, including 'You're DRUNK Go HOME!', 'Breaking Bad's SECRET Ending', 'NOBODY Survived', and 'WAR Criminals'.

Bio

The "bio" can show information such as interests, occupation, supported causes, and more. Since it is variable, businesses will often change their bio to support their newest products

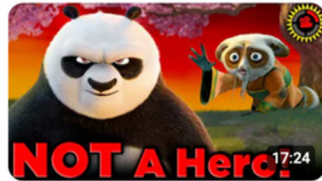
Playlists

A collection of posts, sorted into different categories that may be viewed at any time. Playlists are often used to generally separate users' videos by topic or story. They may also be used to showcase a product line or certain trend.



What to collect: Individual Posts and Comments

Videos



Film Theory: Kung Fu Panda's Cycle of EVIL!
2.7M views · 4 months ago



Film Theory Finale: Don't Trust Your Heroes
3.1M views · 4 months ago



Film Theory: Bill Cipher is Still ALIVE... and I Found Him! (Gravity...)
4M views · 5 months ago

Comments



Pinned by The Film Theorists

@FilmTheory · 3 days ago

Secure your legacy! Download Game of Thrones Legends by clicking here:
<https://gotl.onelink.me/W7zw/tft>

98 Likes · Reply

13 replies



@hades4134 · 1 day ago

"Bread, we want bread" in a heartbeat a thousand voices took up the chant. King Robb, King Joffrey and King Stannis were forgotten and King Bread ruled alone. "BREAD!"
- A Clash of Kings - Chapter 41 - Tyrion IX

532 Likes · Reply

6 replies



@Sayne7 · 1 day ago (edited)

8:58 Sooo what you're saying is.. There is no rule that says a dog can't be King?
Someone send a raven for AerBud Dogaryen

427 Likes · Reply

4 replies



@abdelrahman788 · 1 day ago (edited)

0:25 Robert said that this thing called a chair is not comfortable at all, and simply it's designed to look scary and cool, but you really don't want to sit on it for too long 😂.

164 Likes · Reply

2 replies

Shorts



Minecraft BEAT Netflix 🏆! (3 Body Problem) #shorts
289K views



Kung Fu Panda is Just Fanfic 🐼? #shorts
751K views



THE Fallout SHOW STRAIGHT UP LIED TO YOUR FACE 🤖! #shorts
2.2M views



Could You Survive a Punch from Knuckles? (Sonic the...) #AD
361K views



Can a Stuntman Save Your Life (The Fall Guy) 🎬? #AD
236K views

What to look for

There are two types of content that YouTube releases: shorts and videos. When clicking into a post on the grid, you will open up the video/short, the comments, and the caption to the post. As long as you are a follower of the account, you are able to see all public posts. Posts will also show the day/time it was posted, the caption, a search bar at the top to view similar posts/creators, and all of its user data.

Social Media Platforms Cheat Sheet

PLATFORM	Do I need an account to view content?	Can users see I viewed their profile?	Main purpose	Common content types
Facebook	✓	✗ *but can see views on stories	Personal sharing of text, photos, videos, articles, etc. with your network of 'Friends'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text posts Photos & videos Links to articles
Instagram	✓	✗ *but can see views on stories	Sharing photos and videos with anyone who 'follows' you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photos & videos Short form, 24-hr videos
LinkedIn	✓	✓	Professional networking and job-seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional resume/CV Sharing articles and updates
Twitter	✓	✗	Short-form thought sharing and conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Text (limited to 280 characters) Photos & videos Links to articles
TikTok	✗	✗	Watch and publish short-form looping videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-form videos
YouTube	✗	✗	Publish and watch videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Videos

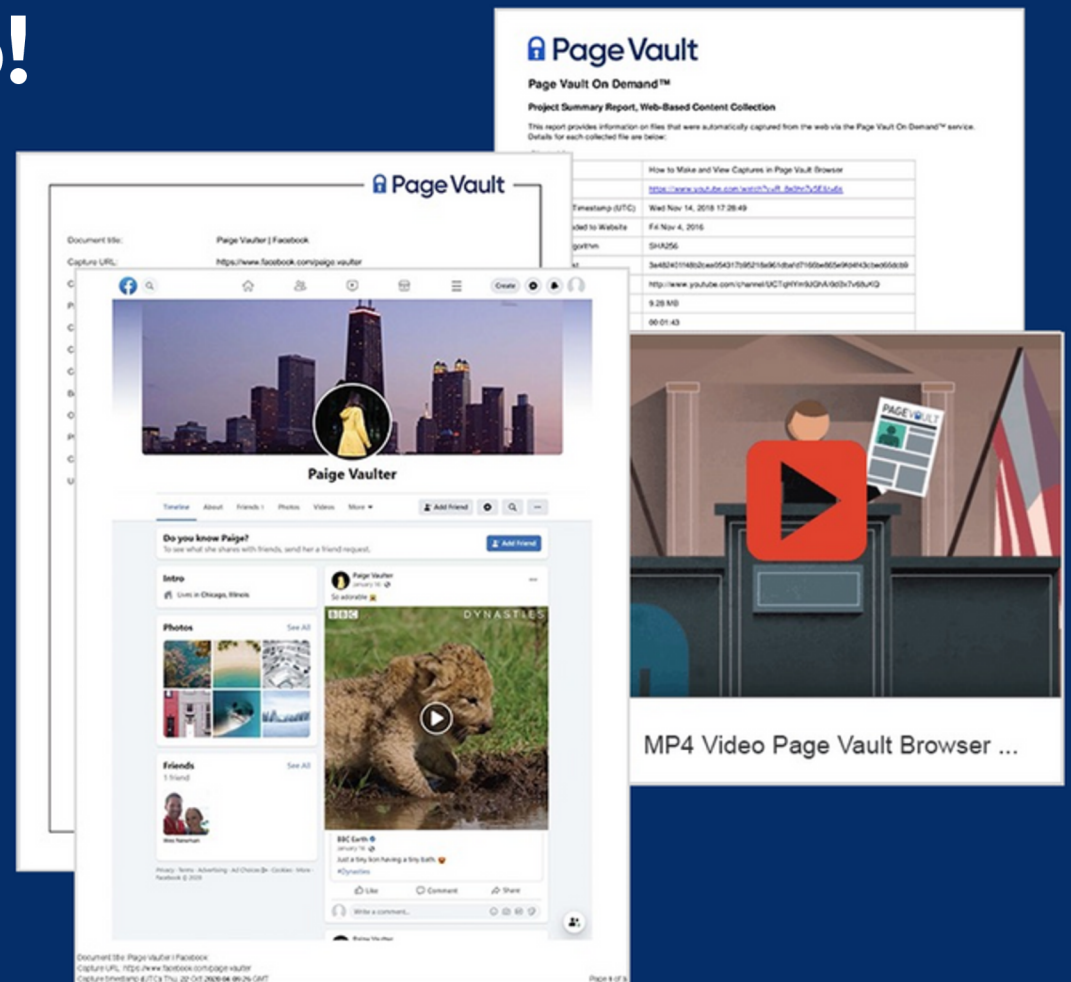
Need to preserve web content?

 Page Vault can help!

Page Vault specializes in full-page screen captures of Facebook and web pages, videos, full website captures, and more.

Outsource to our capture experts with Page Vault On Demand, or get our award-winning software capture as you go.

Contact our sales team anytime at page-vault.com/contact



Page Vault
Page Vault On Demand™
Project Summary Report, Web-Based Content Collection

This report provides information on files that were automatically captured from the web via the Page Vault On Demand™ service. Details for each collected file are below:

Document Title	Document URL	Timestamp (UTC)	Added to Website	Got from	Size
How to Make and View Captures in Page Vault Browser	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8_BdteV0E8u0	Wed Nov 14, 2018 17:28:49	Fri Nov 4, 2016	got from	51K/256
					3e482411148b2e05d5d175921b5d61b4d718b5b55040431e0d55b5b
	http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7gH1xH5G9A9d5uTv5LUNQ	9:28 MB	00:01:43		

Document Title: Paige Vaulter / Facebook
Capture URL: <https://www.facebook.com/paige.vaulter>

Document Title: Paige Vaulter / Facebook
Capture URL: <https://www.facebook.com/paige.vaulter>
Capture Timestamp: 6/7/19 Thu 22:01:26Z/04:00Z/04 GMT

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MP4 Video Page Vault Browser ...