



Checklist: Removing sensitive data before sharing files

There are several ways that sensitive data can be stored in a file and disclosed by mistake. Here are some things to consider to reduce the risk of a data breach when sharing a document.

Spreadsheet e.g. xls(x), ods

- Convert the file to CSV
- Use Document Inspector (File>Info>Check for Issues>Inspect Document)
- Are you sure you know where all the data is?
- Are there hidden columns or rows?
- Are there hidden work sheets?
- Do pivot tables contain linked data?
- Do charts contain linked data?
- Are there formulas which link to external files?
- Is there meta-data that should be removed?
- Is the file size larger than you might expect for the volume of data being disclosed?

Presentation e.g. ppt(x), odp

- Are there presenter notes that should be removed?
- Use Document Inspector (File>Info>Check for Issues>Inspect document)
- Do pivot tables contain linked data?
- Do charts contain linked data?
- Is there meta-data that should be removed?

Image and video e.g. jpg, avi

- Is there attached EXIF data?
- Is there personal data that needs to be obscured (e.g. faces of third-party individuals)?

Word processor e.g. doc(x), odt

- Are there comments within the document that should be removed?
- Use Document Inspector (File>Info>Check for Issues>Inspect document)
- Does the document contain a version history?
- Do pivot tables contain linked data?
- Do charts contain linked data?
- Is there meta-data that should be removed?
- Does the document title or filename contain personal data (e.g. Letter to John Smith)?
- Has a header or footer been automatically added to a printout?

Email e.g. mbox, msg

- Is there data within any attachments that also needs to be redacted?
- Is there meta-data that should be removed?

PDF

- Are there comments that should be removed?
- Are all redactions effectively applied?
- Is there meta-data that should be removed?