



PRIVACY 101: RISK ASSESSMENTS

WHAT IS A RISK ASSESSMENT?

Risk assessments, also known as “threat models,” are how we understand our specific privacy and security needs.

A SECURITY MINDSET

A security mindset is an important part of a risk assessment. It means asking questions like:

- What data trail am I creating (when I do X)? Is this data trail necessary for what I want to do, or can I minimize it?
- Where is my data going? Who can see it? How might they use it?
- Who else is impacted by my privacy and security choices? Are there people in my life who are more vulnerable than me who I may be at risk when I do X?
- How might my risks change in the future?
- What conditions would change my current risk assessment?

RISK ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

What do I want to protect?

Ex. My identity while protesting.

Who do I want to protect it from?

Ex. Bad actors who may wish to doxx or harm me.

What are the consequences if I fail?

Ex. An online harassment campaign against me.

How likely are these consequences?

Ex. This has happened to people I know.

How much work am I willing to do to protect myself?

Ex. I'm willing to cover my face, hair, and other identifying features.

Risk Assessment Framework	Example threat model: I am a new internet user who uses the public library to apply for jobs and access the internet.	Practice your own risk assessment here:
What do I want to protect?	My browsing and search history. The personal information required for job applications.	
Who do I want to protect it from?	Scammers and identity thieves. Malware or computer viruses.	
What are the consequences if I fail?	Financial harm and credit score impacts.	
How likely are these consequences?	I know others who have been scammed, and I get lots of spam emails, calls, and text messages.	
How am I willing to protect myself?	I'll make sure my passwords are unique and strong, and I'll try some password managers to find out which one works for me. I'll use Firefox for more browser privacy. I'll use Signal when I text and delete apps I haven't used lately. I won't click on suspicious links in my emails or texts.	