Privacy Online – Video Transcript

In the real world, privacy feels like a choice. We can close our blinds. We can choose to keep quiet or stay inside. And even when we’re in public buying groceries or talking with a friend, privacy feels like the default. No one’s analyzing our every move.

It might also feel private when we go online and use websites and apps to have discussions, to share photos, and schedule appointments.

You might ask: Does anyone really care about my location, my purchases or what photos I liked on the Web?

The answer is likely “yes”. Many of the websites we use everyday depend on knowing as much as they can about us. The more they know about our actions, preferences, connections and data, the more their service can be tailored to serving our needs - and that is part of what keeps us coming back.

But our information is also valuable for their business. If a company knows the connections and preferences of millions of their users, they can use it to improve their advertising or may even sell this information to other companies.

This, and money from targeted advertising are big reasons many social networking sites are free to use.

So, unlike the real world, privacy is not the default online because websites depend on tracking and remembering information about us.

And this is not necessarily bad. In most cases, we are just one of many millions of users and our data is used as a group and not individually.

But the fact remains that nearly everything we do online is documented somewhere, which brings up important questions like - Who has access to my information? Do I have any choice? Can I see the information a company has about me and how it's being used?

To be more informed about online privacy, here’s what each one of us can do:
First, be aware. Remember that nearly every action we take online is documented and connected across websites.

Second, every major website has a policy that states how our information is being used and what choices we have. Read them.

Third, find out if those websites have privacy settings that we can manage.

Fourth, learn about settings on our computers, web browsers and devices that can increase our privacy.
Part of being happy and productive online often means sharing some personal information. Before you share too much, take the time to understand your options and how your information can be used in the future.