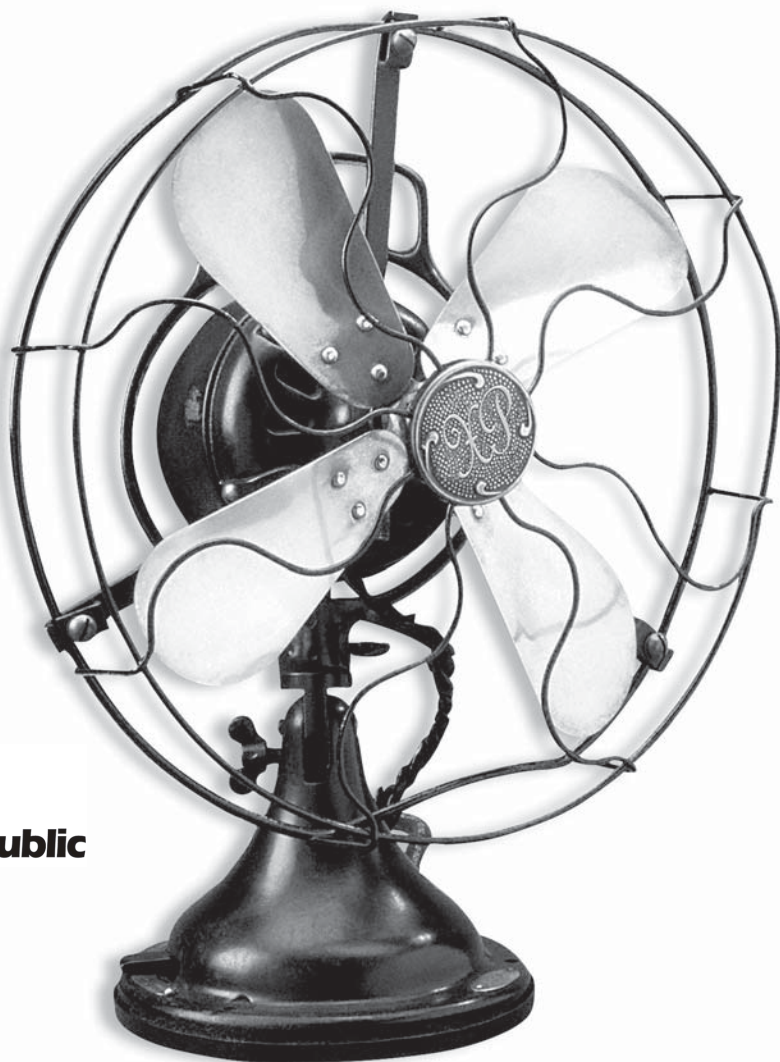


WINDOWS XP HACKS™

**2nd
Edition**
Covers SP2

Tips & Tools for Optimizing Your OS



Presented by:



TechRepublic

O'REILLY®

Preston Gralla

HACK
#36

Surf Anonymously Without a Trace

Feel like people are watching you? On the Web, they probably are. Protect your privacy by using anonymous proxy servers.

Whenever you surf the Web, you leave yourself open to being snooped upon by web sites. They can track your online travels, know what operating system and browser you're running, find out your machine name, peer into your clipboard, uncover the last sites you've visited, examine your history list, delve into your cache, examine your IP address and use that to learn basic information about you such as your geographic location, and more. To a great extent, your Internet life is an open book when you visit.

Don't believe me? Head to <http://www.anonymizer.com/privacytest/>. This page, run by the Anonymizer.com web service, tells you your IP address and machine name. And that's just a start. Click the links such as Exposed Clipboard and Geographical Location. You'll see just a small sampling of what web sites can learn about you. Figure 4-12 shows a web site reporting on my IP address, the contents of my clipboard, my browser information, and my geographic location. It's close enough; I live in Cambridge rather than Boston, and we generally require that people turn over their passports at the border.

Much of the reason why web sites can find out this information about you is due to the trusting nature of the Internet's infrastructure and is inherent in the open client/server relationship between your web browser and the servers on the sites you visit. But a lot of it also has to do with the ability to match up information from your PC to information in publicly available databases—for example, databases that have information about IP addresses.

The best way to make sure web sites can't gather personal information about you and your computer is to surf anonymously; use an anonymous proxy server to sit between you and the web sites you visit. When you use an anonymous proxy server, your browser doesn't contact a web site directly. Instead, it tells a proxy server which web site you want to visit. The proxy server then contacts the web site, and when you get the web site's page you don't get it directly from the site. Instead, it's delivered to you by the proxy server. In that way, your browser never directly contacts the web server whose site you want to view. The web site sees the IP address of the proxy server, not your PC's IP address. It can't read your cookies, see your history list, or examine your clipboard and cache because your PC is never in direct contact with it. You're able to surf anonymously, without a trace.

[Home](#)
[Products](#)
[Support](#)
[Press](#)
[Enterprise](#)

[LOGIN](#) | [ABOUT US](#)

Home > Privacy Threat Test

Welcome to the **ANONYMIZER**
PrivacyTest

Do you know how much of **YOUR** personal information is PUBLICALLY ACCESSIBLE to advertisers, hackers and online snoops? The Anonymizer Privacy Test will show you.

Test: IP Address **Test Results:** Your IP Address is: 65.96.189.35

What is this? Your IP address is your unique "Internet Address". Much like your phone number, with this information you can be tracked and much of your personal information can be stolen.

SOLUTION: Buy Anonymizer Privacy Manager to keep your IP Address secure.

Test: Browser Info **Test Results:** Operating System: Windows NT
Browser name: Internet Explorer
Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 6.0; Windows NT 5.1; Q312461; .NET CLR 1.1.4322)

What is this? Having your operating system and browser information can actually enable web sites you visit to provide a better surfing experience (i.e. CNET's Download.com automatically lands you on a home page with downloads available only for your operating system). However, this information can be used in far more dangerous ways, such as tailoring hacker and virus attacks that exploit specific weaknesses in your system that can steal your information or render your PC useless.

SOLUTION: Buy Anonymizer Privacy Manager and keep your personal operating system and browser information private and secure.

Test: Clipboard **Test Results:**

-----> Thu May 13 14:48:13 EDT 2004:
 Remember this information
 Social Security Number: 12387986453
 Bank account password: OPullt+Er

What is this? Sometimes you can be the victim of convenience. While almost everyone uses the "copy and paste" functions on their PC, you probably don't know that currently copied information is active and easily accessible from your computer's memory. Ever copy and paste an e-mail, password, credit card number or other confidential information? For someone looking to find your personal information, this is like taking candy from a baby.

SOLUTION: Buy Anonymizer Privacy Manager with SpyWare Killer to keep the contents of your clipboard and your entire PC secure from spyware that steals information from your PC.

Test: Sample Cookie **Test Results:** Below is a cookie we've just placed* on your computer:
visa 12/03,1234, XXXX XXXX XXXX 1234

What is this? Cookies like this can contain personal information including:

- Your credit card information
- Your e-mail address
- Your home address & phone number

* The sample cookie we have placed on your computer if for informational purposes only. We are not collecting any information from you in any way.

SOLUTION: Buy Anonymizer Total System Sweeper to clean your PC of cookies and other hidden threats that are deposited on your PC while you surf the internet.

Test: Geotrack **Test Results:** Your country is: usa
Your state is :massachusetts
Your city is : boston

What is this? Once someone knows your IP address, one of the easiest things they can determine is your location. Marketers usually use this information to blast you with unwanted targeted advertising or spam. Even worse, this information can be used by online stalkers and snoops to track where you or your children live.

SOLUTION: Buy Anonymizer Privacy Manager to keep your location private.

Test: Sites Visited **Test Results:** While online today, you have visited 26 pages in this window.

Solutions

Get Anonymizer Privacy Manager and protect yourself against all of these privacy threats!
Only \$29.99

BUY Now >

- Surf the web **SAFELY** with Anonymizer's patented anonymous surfing technology
- Runs **AUTOMATICALLY** and **TRANSPARENTLY** on your PC
- **BLOCKS** Pop-ups
- Helps **STOP SPAM** by blocking e-mail address harvesting
- **FILTERS** and **BLOCKS** Cookies, Banner Ads, Tracking Bugs and more
- **BLOCKS** malicious code or harmful scripts on your PC

BUY Now >

Or... get complete protection with Anonymizer Total Net Shield!
Only \$99.95

BUY Now >

- **ENCRYPT** all of your communications with secure and private:
 - Surfing
 - E-mail
 - Chat/IM
 - Newsgroups
- Surf the web **SAFELY** with one click

BUY Now >

Figure 4-12. The Anonymizer.com web service, exposing my current geographic location

148 | The Web

There are two primary ways to use anonymous proxy servers. You can run client software on your PC, which does the work of contacting the server for you, or you can visit a web site, which does the work of contacting the server.

Web-Based Anonymizer

If you don't want to go to the hassle of installing a client—and if you don't want to pay for software—to surf anonymously, go to Anonymizer.com (<http://www.anonymizer.com>). In the box near the top of the page, type the name of the site to which you want to surf, and you'll head there anonymously. The proxy server will grab the page for you, and you'll get the page from the proxy server. You can also download a free version that runs as a toolbar in Internet Explorer. Surf as you would normally, and you'll visit those web sites directly. When you want to visit a site anonymously, click a button and the anonymous proxy server will do the work for you.

A fuller version of the program is available on a subscription basis for \$29.95 per year or \$9.95 for three months. It blocks banner ads, stops pop ups, encrypts the URLs you type so that they can't be read by your ISP or network administrator, and adds a few other features as well. I don't find the extra features worth the money, but if these kinds of things are important to you, go ahead and spend the money. (To learn how to block pop ups, turn to “Stop Pop Ups with SP2—and Without It” [Hack #33].)



When you use this site, some sites will appear broken, with text and graphics displaying oddly. But it's a small price to pay for your privacy.

Use Internet Explorer for Anonymous Surfing

If you want to surf anonymously, you don't have to pay a service. With a bit of hackery, you can use Internet Explorer, or any other browser. To do it, you use an anonymous proxy server to sit between you and the web sites you visit.

To use an anonymous proxy server in concert with your browser, first find an anonymous proxy server. Hundreds of free, public proxy servers are available, but many frequently go offline or are very slow. To find the best one, go to <http://www.atomintersoft.com/products/alive-proxy/proxy-list>. The web site lists information about each server, including its uptime percentage and the last time the server was checked to see if it was online.

Surf Anonymously Without a Trace

Find the server with the highest percentage of uptime. Write down the server's IP address and the port it uses. For example, in the listing 24.236.148.15:80, the IP address is 24.236.148.15, and the port number is 80.

In Internet Explorer, select Tools → Internet Options, click the Connections tab, and click the LAN Settings button. Check the “Use a proxy server for your LAN” box. In the Address field, type in the IP address of the proxy server. In the Port field, type in its port number. Check the “Bypass proxy server for local addresses” box, as shown in Figure 4-13; you don't need to remain anonymous on your local network.

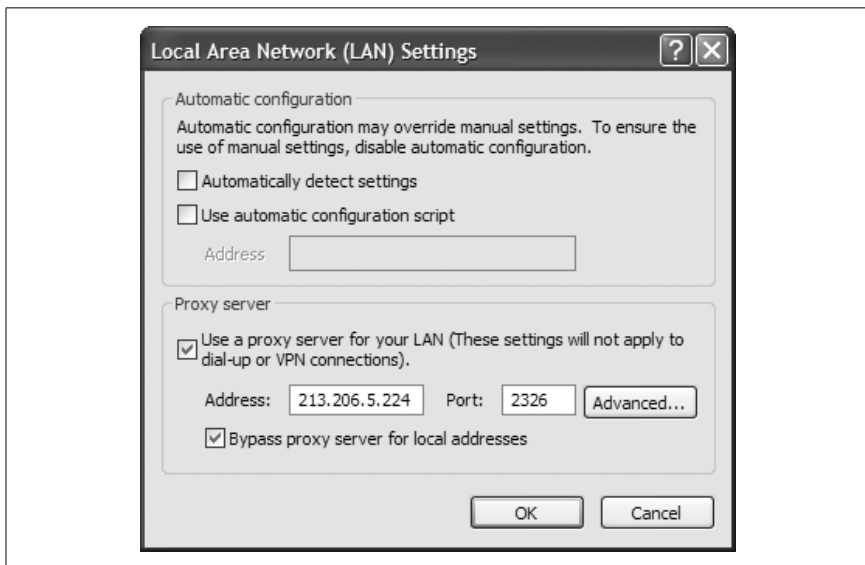


Figure 4-13. Setting up Internet Explorer to surf the Web anonymously

Click OK and then OK again to close the dialog boxes. Now when you surf the Web, the proxy server will protect your privacy. Keep in mind that proxy servers can make surfing the Web much slower.

Get Software for Anonymous Surfing

If you prefer to install software, get Steganos Internet Anonym 5 (<http://www.steganos.com/en/sia>). In addition to anonymous proxy serving, it kills pop ups and manages cookies. You can try it for free, but if you want to keep it you'll have to pay \$29.95.

See Also

- Go to <http://www.gilc.org/speech/anonymous/remailer.html> to send email anonymously so that it can't be traced to you as the sender. Whistle-blowers might want to use this feature, but others should make sure not to abuse it.
- For shareware that cleans out your cached files, destroys your history trail, and uses a variety of other methods to clean all traces of where you've surfed, try SurfSecret Privacy Protector (<http://www.surfsecret.com>).
- “Stop Pop Ups with SP2—and Without It” [Hack #33]
- “Kill Spyware and Web Bugs” [Hack #34]
- “Take a Bite Out of Cookies” [Hack #35]
- “Don't Get Reeled In by Phishers” [Hack #37]

This material has been adapted from *Windows XP Hacks*, 2nd Edition by Preston Gralla, published by O'Reilly Media, Inc. Copyright O'Reilly Media, Inc., 2005. All rights reserved. To purchase this or other O'Reilly publications, [click here](#).