SOS Intelligence

OSINT - Tips for successful online research

1. Define Your Objectives

Clarify Your Goal
- Decide what information you need and why, such as gathering competitor insights or identifying digital threats.
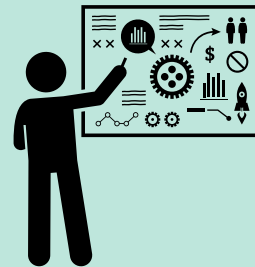
Focus Your Questions
- Outline key questions to keep your search on track, like "Who's behind this account?" or "What data is publicly available on this organisation?"

2. Pre-Planning

Develop a Search Plan
- List sources, keywords, and tools you'll use for research. Identify potential obstacles, like limited data access, and plan ways around them.

3. Identify Data Sources

Explore the Surface, Deep, and Dark Web
- Choose which web layers to search:
  - Surface: Public sites, social media, and news.
  - Deep: Subscription databases, private forums.
  - Dark Web: Access hidden networks only if required and legally permitted.

Additional Tips

- Stay Legal and Ethical: Gather only publicly accessible or legally obtainable information, and respect privacy laws to avoid breaching security.
- Use Strong Security Measures: Protect your identity and privacy by using secure connections and anonymising tools. Ensure your data remains safe when using OSINT tools.

4. Use Tools and Techniques
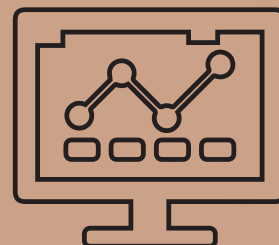
Automated and Manual Approaches
- Use search engines, advanced operators (like site:), and OSINT tools (e.g., Shodan, Maltego) to find data. Pair automated searches with manual review for accuracy.

5. Evaluate & Organise

Filter and Verify Findings
- Assess each source for reliability. Organise data logically, and cross-reference to validate information before concluding.

6. Report Findings

Summarise Key Insights
- Present your findings in a clear, actionable format with recommendations. Secure sensitive information before sharing it with stakeholders.