



Social Media Collections For Legal Professionals: Best Practices

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

UPDATED MAY 2022

PLEASE SHARE THIS WITH
YOUR COLLEAGUES!

Sharing best practices from more than 9 years of social media collections

Who is Page Vault?

Page Vault specializes in full-page screen captures of web content such as social media sites like Facebook and Instagram, videos, web page, full website captures, and more.

Page Vault solutions archive web pages exactly as they appear online and preserve key metadata such as URL and date of access. Page Vault also provides eDiscovery load files, and affidavits are available for any capture.

If you're tasked to collect a relevant party's social media presence, you might wonder: what do I even need to look for and capture?

That question often leads people to Page Vault. Since 2013, we've been collecting and preserving online content for legal professionals, with social media making up a huge portion of those preservations.

This guide distills the advice we give to clients day-in and day-out into an easy to follow step-by-step guide for your own investigations and preservations. Our recommendations here are what most attorneys and investigators we

work with end up needing for their matters.

This guide walks you through:

1. What you can find on each platform;
2. Key features to keep in mind when accessing the platform; and
3. Step-by-step instructions of what to look for and capture on each platform.

We hope you find this guide helpful. If so, please share it with your colleagues, or reach out to us at page-vault.com.

 **Note: Social media platforms change often!**
You can visit [the resource page](#) on Page Vault's website to check if you have the latest version of the guide.

What's on the "what to know" page?

Platform summary

A quick explanation of the platform, it's primary functions, and how users interact with it.

Most common uses

What's the most common usage on the platform? If there are notable features that fall outside the majority cases, they will be noted in the 'other commonly used features' section.

Common content types

All platforms have their primary purpose, and the content types available largely reflect that purpose. We list the most common content types that are visible on a person's profile and that attorneys typically want preserved.

We do not note comments or replies as a content type, but nearly all platforms have a public commenting system.

The screenshot shows a page titled "Facebook: What to know" with the Page Vault logo in the top right. The page content is organized into several sections:

- Platform summary:** Facebook is a platform where people can stay connected to friends and family. Each Facebook user has a profile page containing basic information as well as a running feed (the "Timeline") of content they share, such as short text updates, photos, videos, and links to articles. Many businesses also maintain a Facebook page with information and updates.
- Do I need an account?:** A form with a "Yes" checkbox (checked) and a "No" checkbox (unchecked).
- Most common uses:** A list of two items: 1. Personal sharing of and engagement with photos, videos, articles, etc. 2. Businesses maintaining an account to update their customers or users.
- Common content types:** A list of five items: Text (no length limit), Photos, Videos, Links to articles, Professional updates, and Short form, expiring videos ("stories").
- Can users see I viewed their profile?:** A form with a "Yes" checkbox (unchecked) and a "No" checkbox (checked).
- What information can I see?:** A list of three items: The person posting can determine the privacy of each piece of content they share (posts, videos, links, etc.); Content shared publicly can be seen by anyone logged into Facebook; Content shared privately is only available to those who have been accepted as "friends" of the person (see warning below!).
- Other commonly used features:** A list of four items: Private messages with individuals and/or groups of people; Groups for common purpose or interest; Event pages (for info and RSVPs); Buy/sell products ("Marketplace").
- Ethics warnings:** A green box at the bottom with a warning icon and text: "Warning! Do not 'friend' anyone for the purpose of accessing information. This could be an ethics violation."

Callout boxes from the surrounding text point to these sections: "Platform summary" points to the introductory text; "Most common uses" points to the "Most common uses" section; "Common content types" points to the "Common content types" section; "Do I need an account?" points to the "Do I need an account?" form; "Can users see I viewed their profile?" points to the "Can users see I viewed their profile?" form; "What information can I see?" points to the "What information can I see?" section; "Other commonly used features" points to the "Other commonly used features" section; and "Ethics warnings" points to the warning box at the bottom.

Ethics warnings

If there are ethics issues to be aware of, we'll flag them at the bottom of the profile.

Other commonly used features

If there are features that are commonly used but not necessarily part of the typical investigation areas, we will note that in this section.

Do I need an account?

When we check 'yes' on need an account, that means either you are fully blocked from viewing without logging in, or that you will be limited to one or two pages and then prompted for a login.

When we check 'no', you will not be forced to log in, although you may see less content than if you are logged in.

Can users see I viewed their profile?

Our answer assumes that you have a standard account, not a premium version (some platforms, like LinkedIn, offer anonymous browsing only for premium accounts).

What information can I see?

Social platforms vary widely in their privacy settings. Some platforms allow for privacy settings on each piece of information; others take an account-based approach, where content is either all-public or all-private. Our explanations highlight the platform's approach and content that is usually public.

Step-by-step collection
instructions for each
social media platform

Facebook: What to know

Facebook is a platform where people can stay connected to friends and family.

Each Facebook user has a profile page containing basic information as well as a running feed (the "Timeline") of content they share, such as short text updates, photos, videos, and links to articles.

Many businesses also maintain a Facebook page with information and updates.

Do I need an account?

Yes No

Most common uses

1. Personal sharing of and engagement with photos, videos, articles, etc.
2. Businesses maintaining an account to update their customers or users.

Common content types

- Text (no length limit)
- Photos
- Videos
- Links to articles
- Professional updates
- Short form, expiring videos ("stories")

Can users see I viewed their profile?

Yes No*

*Users cannot see profile views, but can see who viewed their "stories"

What information can I see?

- The person posting can determine the privacy of each piece of content they share (posts, videos, links, etc.)
- Content shared publicly can be seen by anyone logged into Facebook
- Content shared privately is only available to those who have been accepted as "friends" of the person (see warning below!)

Other commonly used features

- Private messages with individuals and/or groups of people
- Groups for common purpose or interest
- Buy/sell products ("Marketplace")

Warning! Do not "friend" anyone for the purpose of accessing information. This could be an ethics violation.

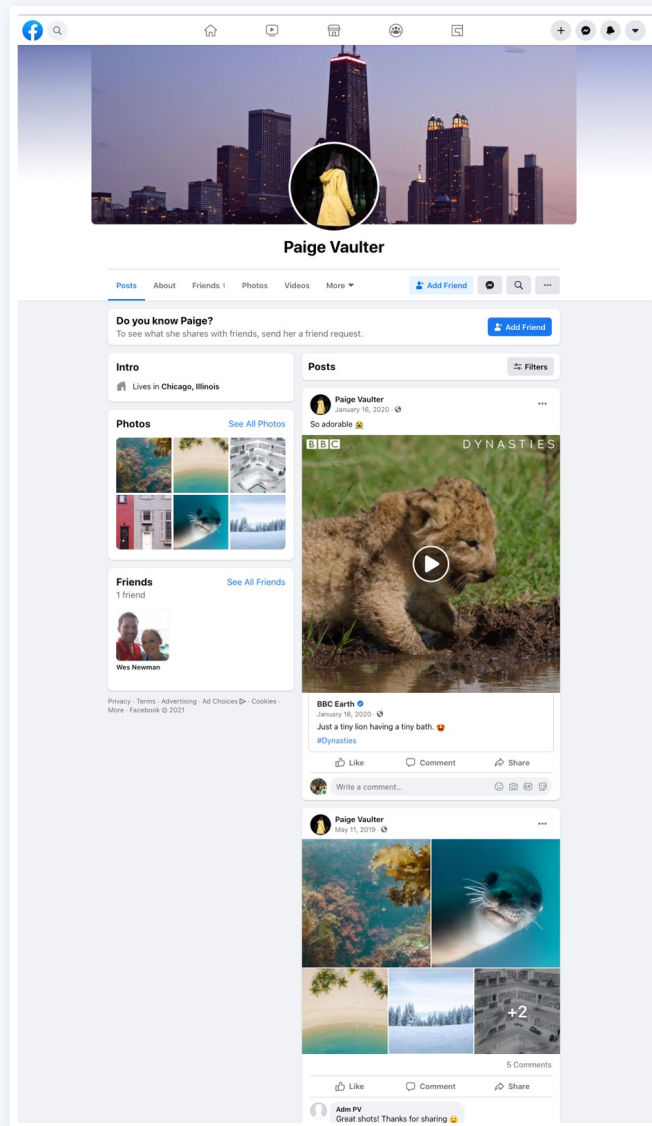
Facebook: What to collect

These are the most common sections captured by legal professionals

STEP 1:

Collect the Timeline

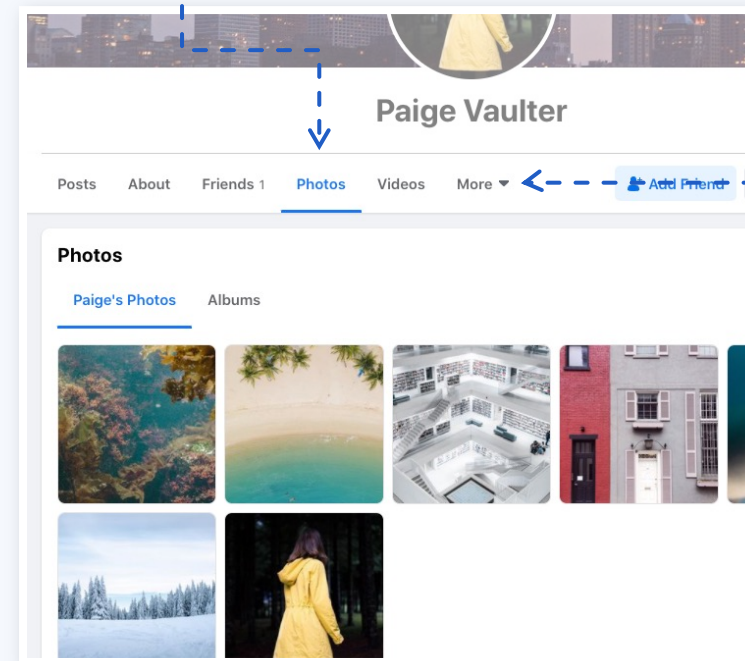
In most cases, legal professionals collect the Timeline. The Timeline is the main source of content for a profile; it contains the users' posts: text posts, photos, videos, articles, etc. Once on the person's profile page, scroll down to reveal the full timeline and expand any post's comments that are relevant.



STEP 2:

Photos and Videos

In some cases, it is helpful to collect specific photos and videos. For those cases, go directly to the Photos tab and Videos tab (in More) and gather the content from the albums.



STEP 3:

Other information

Depending on the facts of the case, there may be other areas on Facebook that contain relevant information. Click on More in the navigation bar to see further options.

Instagram: What to know

Instagram is a website that allows people and businesses to share pictures and videos with followers, usually accompanied by a text caption.

Each user has a profile page with two features:

1. a short personal summary, commonly called the 'bio'; and
2. a summary feed of all the photos they have shared, known as 'the grid'.

Do I need an account?

Yes No

Most common uses

1. Personal sharing of and engagement with photos and videos
2. Businesses maintaining an account to update their customers or users

Common content types

- Photos (including multiple photos in one post, called a carousel)
- Videos
- Short form, expiring videos and images ("stories")
- Short form, looping videos ("reels")

Can users see I viewed their profile?

Yes No*

*Users cannot see profile views, but can see who viewed their "stories" and "story highlights"

What information can I see?

- An entire account is either public or private—you cannot have public posts from private accounts.
- Content shared on public accounts can be seen by anyone logged in to Instagram.
- Content shared by private accounts can only be seen by approved followers (see warning below!)

Other commonly used features

- Private messages with individuals and/or groups of people

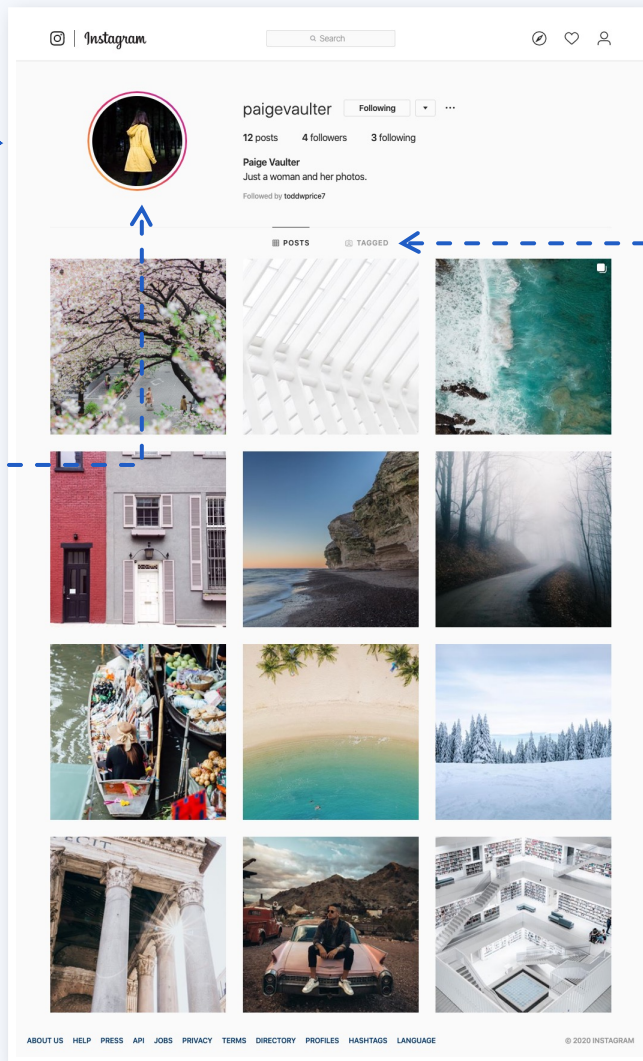
Warning! Do not request to follow a private account for the purpose of accessing information. This could be an ethics violation.

Instagram: What to collect

These are the most common sections captured by legal professionals

STEP 1: Collect the grid

In most cases, legal professionals collect the photo grid, the summary of all the photos on the account. This page also includes the profile information at the top.

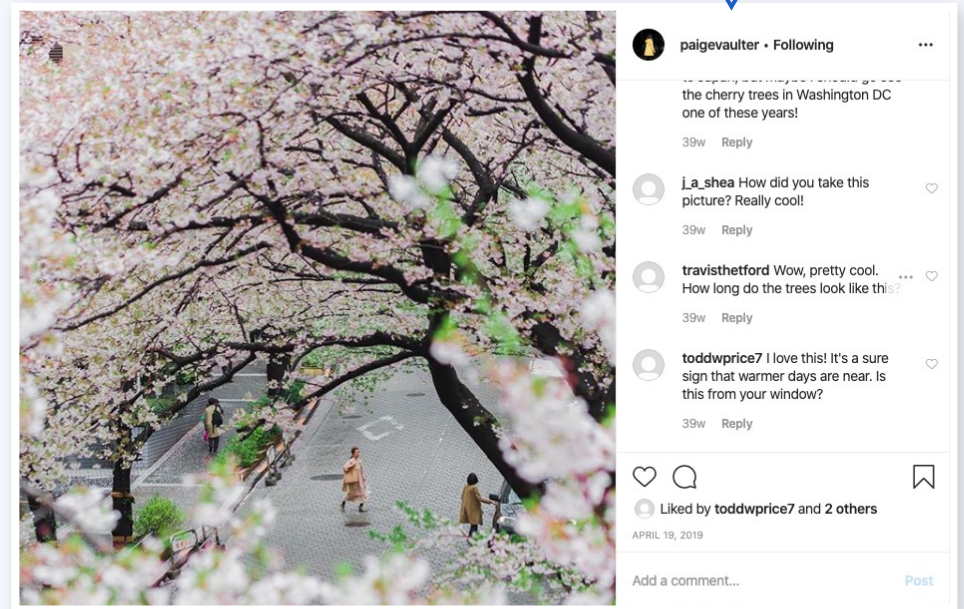


STEP 3: Stories

In some cases, it is helpful to collect specific stories (short-form pictures and videos only available 24-hours). A story is available if there is a red and orange circle around the profile picture. Click on the profile picture to reveal the story.

STEP 2: Individual photos and comments

In some cases, it is helpful to collect specific photos and videos. Click on a picture or video from the person's grid to read the post caption and any comments.



STEP 4: Tagged Photos

Tagged pictures and videos, which are different from the normal profile pictures and videos, may be another source of evidence. You can also follow step 2 to capture the comments and likes for any specific tagged picture or video.

in LinkedIn: What to know

LinkedIn is a public resume and professional networking website.

Every user has a profile page that acts as a digital resume. People can also share articles, join affinity groups, and apply for jobs posted in the jobs section.

Businesses also use LinkedIn to maintain a corporate page, share relevant news and articles, do sales prospecting, and recruit for job openings.

Do I need an account?

Yes No

Most common uses

1. Maintaining a public resume and engaging with your professional network (sharing articles and updates, etc.)
2. Businesses maintaining an account to update their customers, employees, and potential employees

Common content types

- Professional resume/CV, including skills and sample work from projects
- Sharing articles and updates

Can users see I viewed their profile?

Yes* No

*You can adjust your LinkedIn privacy settings to make your views anonymous ([reference](#))

What information can I see?

- Most content on a person's profile/resume is publicly visible
- People may have additional information or activity that is only visible to those in their network or within two degrees of separation. (see warning below!)

Other commonly used features

- Private messages with individuals and/or groups of people
- Professional groups
- Job postings and applying to jobs

Warning! Do not request to connect with anyone for the purpose of accessing non-public information. This could be an ethics violation.

LinkedIn: What to collect

These are the most common sections captured by legal professionals

STEP 1: Collect the user's profile

The user's profile contains the bulk of the information for a LinkedIn user. It contains relevant professional information such as:

- Work experience
- Education
- Skills and endorsements
- Publications
- Recommendations
- Accomplishments
- Interests

Jeffrey Eschbach · 2nd
Founder & CEO, Page Vault Inc. | Kellogg Professor | Angel Investor | Speaker
Chicago, Illinois · 500+ connections · Contact info

Highlights
4 mutual connections
You and Jeffrey both know Mario Caston, Donald Sawyer, and 2 others

About
JEFFREY ESCHBACH - Tech Founder & CEO | Professor at Kellogg | Angel Investor | Public Speaker

Activity
3,360 followers

Experience

Founder and CEO
Page Vault Inc.
Oct 2012 - Present · 7 yrs 5 mos
Chicago, IL 60667, Adams St.
PAGE VAULT captures web-based content for legal use.

Northwestern University - Kellogg School of Management
3 yrs 2 mos
Director of Program Outreach, KIEI (Kellogg Innovation and Entrepreneurship Initiative)
Aug 2018 - Present · 1 yr 7 mos
Evanston, IL

Founding Partner & Principal / Angel Investor
Chicago Early Growth Ventures
Dec 2016 - Present · 1 yr 3 mos
Chicago, IL

Public Speaker
3 yrs 9 mos
CORPORATE PRESENTATIONS: Law Startup, Digital Tech

Member
The Chicago Leadership Alliance
May 2016 - Present · 3 yrs 10 mos
Chicago

Education

Northwestern University - Kellogg School of Management
Master of Business Administration (MBA), Graduated with Distinction (top 10% of class), Focus: Entrepreneurship & Tech Strategy
2012 - 2015

Purdue University
BSCEI, Bachelor Science Computer and Electrical Engineering, with Honors, GPA: 3.8 / 4.0

STEP 2: (case specific): Collect the user's activity

If you need to see the user's activity on LinkedIn, you can select that on their profile and view what they have shared, liked, and commented on.

Twitter: What to know

Twitter is a micro-publishing and conversation platform, where people share thoughts in short messages commonly known as Tweets. Users can reply to Tweets, which become threaded as conversations. Tweets are limited to 280 text characters and may also include an image or a link.

Each Twitter user has a profile page with a short bio, a feed of all their Tweets, and an option to see the Tweets they have replied to.

In order to see someone's latest updates, you can 'follow' them, which will make their Tweets appear in your own feed. Users are alerted when someone follows them.

Do I need an account?

Yes No

Most common uses

1. Sharing thoughts and engaging in conversations via public messages (Tweets)
2. Businesses maintaining an account to update their customers or users, and often to provide support.

Common content types

- Short-form text (limited to 280 characters)
- Photos
- Videos
- Links to articles

Can users see I viewed their profile?

Yes No

What information can I see?

- Posts on public accounts can be seen by anyone who is logged into Twitter. An entire account is either public or private—you cannot have public posts from private accounts.
- Content shared by private accounts can only be seen by approved followers (see warning below!)
- Twitter limits the visible Tweet history to 3,200 Tweets in the user's feed.

Other commonly used features

- Private messages with individuals and/or groups of people

Warning! Do not request to follow any private accounts for the purpose of accessing information. This could be an ethics violation.



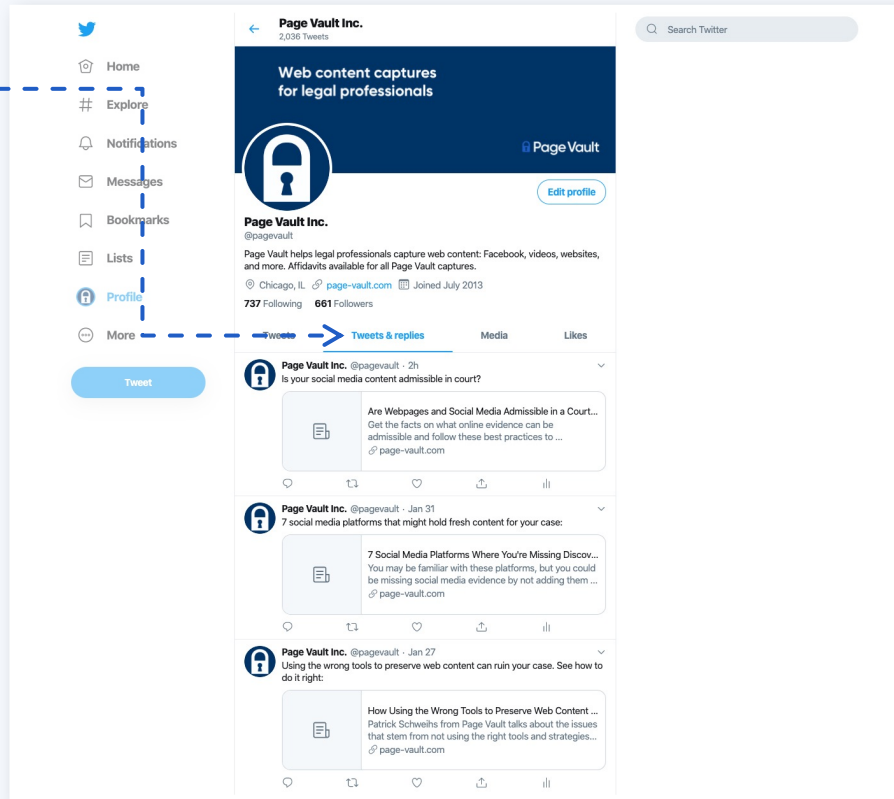
Twitter: What to collect

These are the most common sections captured by legal professionals

STEP 1: Collect the "Tweets and Replies"

In most cases you want to collect what the account has shared on Twitter. The main page actually only shows primary Tweets—to see all posting activity, select the 'Tweets and Replies' tab on the profile.

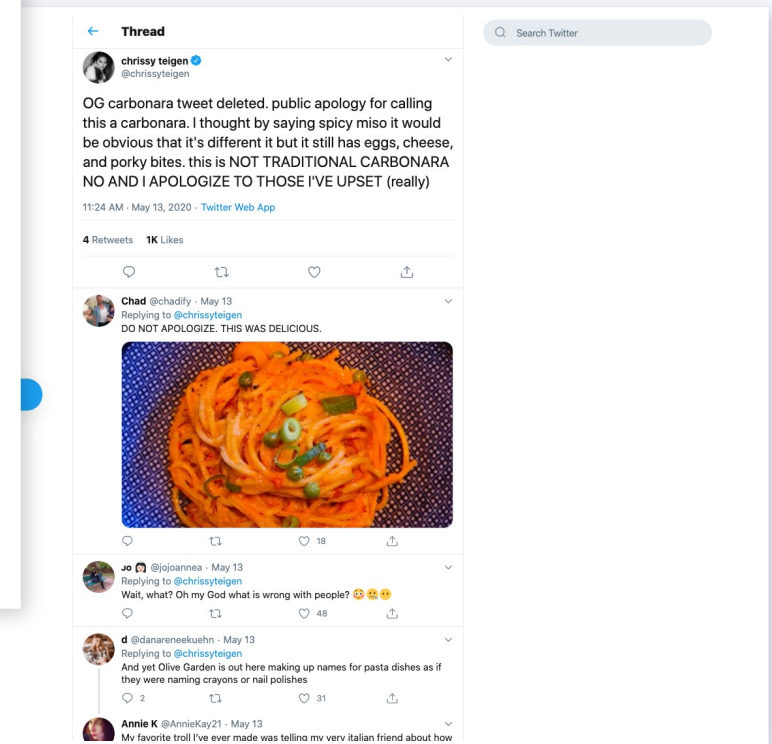
Once on the person's page, scroll down to reveal the full content, and then capture.



STEP 2:

(case specific): Collect individual Tweet threads

If you want to see a full Tweet thread including all the other replies, not just your user's, click on an individual Tweet. You will then need to scroll to the bottom to reveal all the replies in the thread.



TikTok: What to know

TikTok is a webapp that allows individuals and businesses to share short-form, looping videos.

As of May 2022, short-form videos are the only media type on the platform.

Each user has a profile page with two features:

1. a short personal summary, commonly called the 'bio'; and
2. a summary feed of all the videos they have shared.

Do I need an account?

- Yes No

Most common uses

1. Personal sharing of videos
2. Businesses maintaining an account to attract new customers

Common content types

- Short-form looping videos

Can users see I viewed their profile?

- Yes No*

What information can I see?

- An entire account is either public or private—you cannot have public posts from private accounts.
- Content shared on public accounts can be seen by anyone. If you do not log in, you will eventually run into a CAPTCHA to view most videos.
- Content shared by private accounts can only be seen by approved followers (see warning below!)

Other commonly used features

- Private messages. PMs can only be exchanged if both parties follow the other.

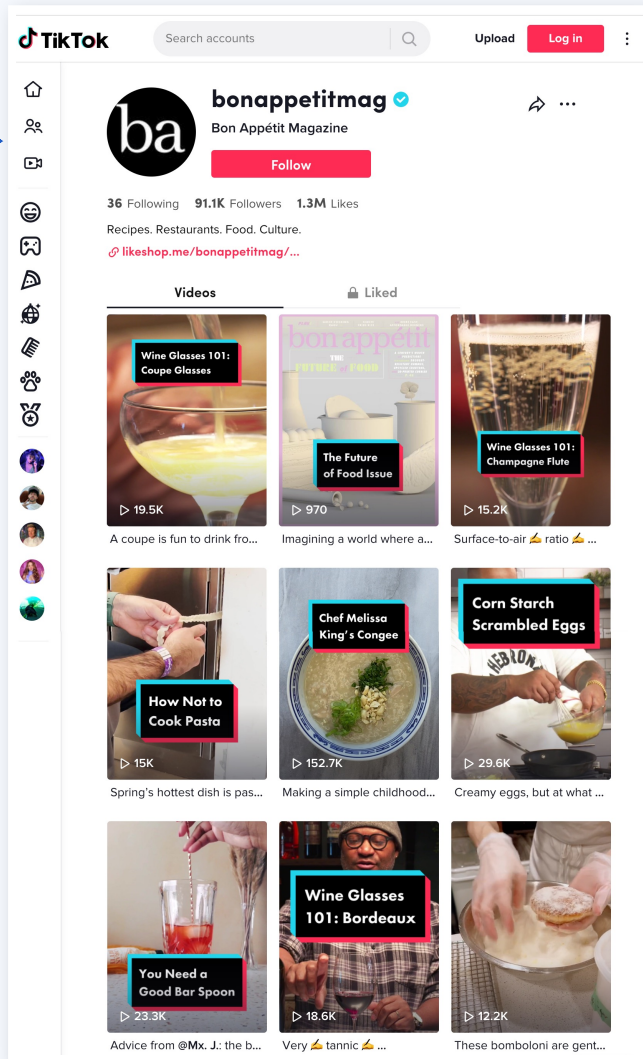
Warning! Do not request to follow a private account for the purpose of accessing information. This could be an ethics violation.

TikTok: What to collect

These are the most common sections captured by legal professionals

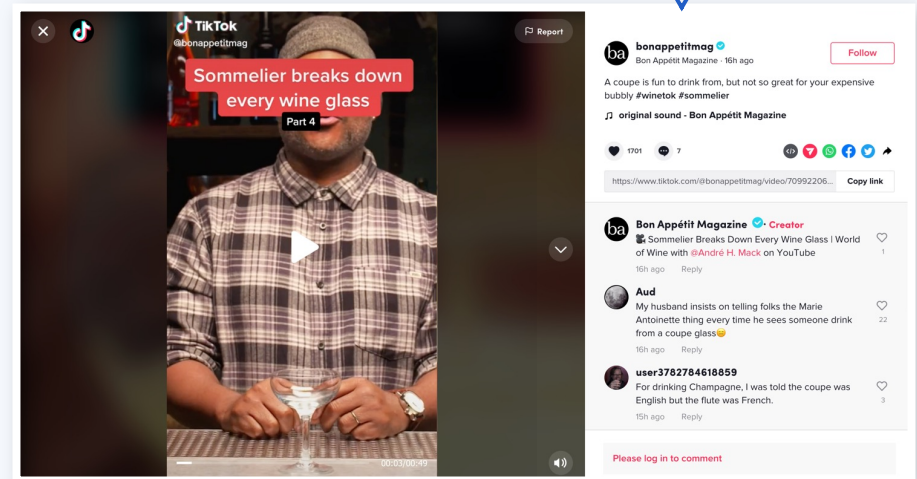
STEP 1: Collect the profile

In most cases, legal professionals collect the profile page, the summary of all the videos on the account. This page also includes the profile information at the top.



STEP 2: Individual videos and comments

In some cases, it is helpful to collect specific videos and their comments. Click on video from the person's profile to capture the video and any comments.



YouTube: Need to know

YouTube is a website to post, share and watch videos.

Videos are often published with extensive notes and links to additional resources mentioned in the video.

Do I need an account?

Yes No

Most common uses

1. Sharing and viewing videos for personal use or interests
2. Professional news and entertainment companies maintain channels with video content
3. Businesses may publish videos for training, support, or brand awareness purposes

Common content types

- Videos

Can users see I viewed their profile?

Yes No

What information can I see?

- Viewability of videos depends on the creator's settings. Most videos are public and can be found and viewed by anyone.
- Some videos may exist publicly but are not shown on the creator's channel page. You need a direct URL link to access these videos.
- Videos may also be password-protected.

Other commonly used features

- N/A

YouTube: What to collect

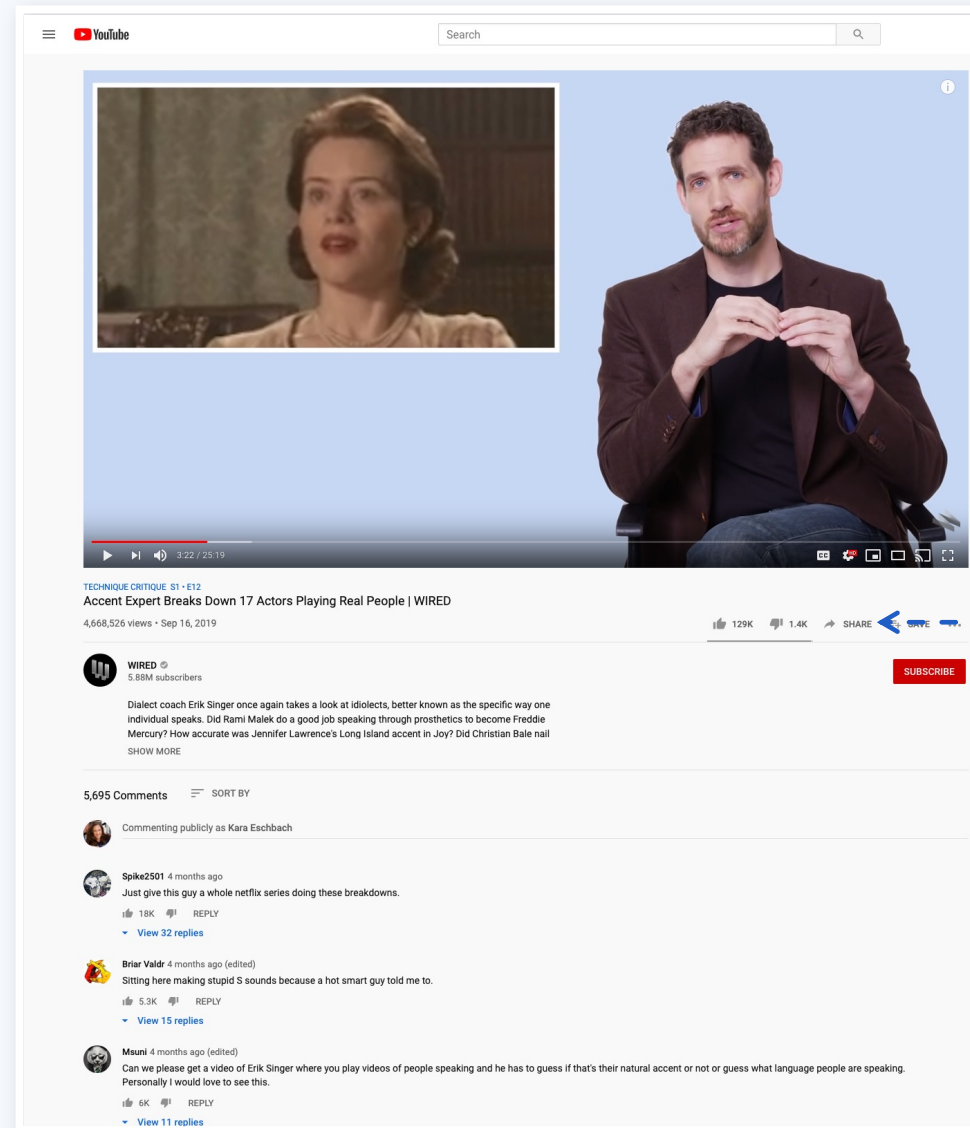
These are the most common sections captured by legal professionals



STEP 1:

Collect the video still and comments

To show the page that the video was found on and any comments, capture a still of the page and the comments. You will need to scroll down to reveal all the comments and replies related to the video.



STEP 2:

Collect the video file

Next, capture the video file itself using a video download tool. If using Page Vault Batch, simply enter the YouTube URL into the video collection area under "submit new job." You can get the URL by clicking on "share" under the video.



Yelp: Need to know

Yelp is a crowdsourced review website for local brick-and-mortar businesses; think restaurants, stores, dry cleaners, and shoe repairs.

Each business has its own page, usually set up by the business. Typically a business will provide the hours, address, phone number, website link and additional general information. Users can write reviews about the business location, products and services, and provide additional information like photos and menu items. A business can respond to reviews posted on its page.

Do I need an account?

Yes No

Most common uses

1. To share and read customer reviews of a local business
2. Businesses maintain their listing to provide helpful information for customers like updated store hours and current offerings

Common content types

- Reviews
- Photos
- General business information (hours, location, etc.)
- Menus (for restaurants)

Can users see I viewed their profile?

Yes No

What information can I see?

- Businesses are able to post previews that include pictures, website links, overviews, hours, etc.
- Reviews are public, but Yelp's algorithm appears to filter and sort reviews based on their 'relevancy', so you may not see all posted reviews.

Other commonly used features

- Making reservations for restaurants who have the feature enabled
- Directly messaging with a businesses

Yelp: What to collect

These are the most common sections captured by legal professionals

STEP 1: Collect the business page

The main profile page shows the company-provided information and reviews left by patrons.

The screenshot shows the main profile page for Alinea on Yelp. At the top, there's a search bar with 'tacos, cheap dinr' and 'San Francisco, CA'. Below that, the business name 'Alinea' is displayed with a 'Claimed' status and 2167 reviews. The address is '1723 N Halsted St, Chicago, IL 60614'. The hours of operation are listed for each day of the week. There are also sections for 'Popular Dishes' (Black Truffle, Lamb, Lobster) and 'You Might Also Consider' (Wrigley BBQ, Gyu-Kaku Japanese BBQ).

The screenshot shows the review section for Alinea. It features a 'Recommended Reviews' section with a review by Michelle N. from Miramar, FL, dated 1/17/2020. The review text describes a fine dining experience. Below the review, there are pagination links and a '92 other reviews that are not currently recommended' section.

STEP 2: Collect the reviews

Yelp only shows select reviews at first. To see more reviews, you may have to click through the pagination links at the bottom of the page to see and capture all comments.

Social Media Platforms Cheat Sheet

<i>PLATFORM</i>	<i>Do I need an account to view content?</i>	<i>Can users see I viewed their profile?</i>	<i>Main purpose</i>	<i>Common content types</i>
Facebook	✓	✗ <i>*but can see views on stories</i>	Personal sharing of text, photos, videos, articles, etc. with your network of 'Friends'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text posts • Photos & videos • Links to articles
Instagram	✓	✗ <i>*but can see views on stories</i>	Sharing photos and videos with anyone who 'follows' you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photos & videos • Short form, 24-hr videos
LinkedIn	✓	✓	Professional networking and job-seeking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional resume/CV • Sharing articles and updates
Twitter	✓	✗	Short-form thought sharing and conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text (limited to 280 characters) • Photos & videos • Links to articles
TikTok	✗	✗	Watch and publish short-form looping videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-form videos
YouTube	✗	✗	Publish and watch videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos
Yelp	✗	✗	Local business reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business information (location, hours, etc.) • Reviews

Need to preserve web content?

Page Vault can help!

Page Vault specializes in full-page screen captures of Facebook and web pages, videos, full website captures, and more.

Outsource to our capture experts with [Page Vault On Demand](#), or get our award-winning [software](#) to capture as you go.

The collage features three main elements:

- Project Summary Report:** A document titled "Page Vault On Demand™ Project Summary Report, Web-Based Content Collection". It includes a table with the following data:

Document Title	Page Vautler Facebook
Document ID	7F2D
Capture URL	https://www.facebook.com/paige.vautler
Capture Timestamp	6/17/18 Thu, 22:01:2008 04:49:29 GMT
- Facebook Profile Screenshot:** A full-page capture of the Facebook profile for Paige Vautler, showing her profile picture, cover photo, and a post from BBC Earth about a lion cub.
- MP4 Video Player:** A video player interface with a red play button, showing a scene from a video with a person at a podium and a flag.