OSINT techniques cheat sheet

Check claims, photos, files, places and websites with information anyone can see. Never use it to track a person.

dedigger
dedigger.com

1. **Ask one clear question**
2. **Collect public material**
3. **Pivot to the next clue**
4. **Judge every source**
5. **Save links and archives**
6. **Report how sure you are**

1 Search operators

Where is the original document?

Try `"annual report" filetype:pdf site:gov.in`

Also `-word` to exclude, `before:2024`, `intitle:`

> Operators are strong hints, not rules. No result doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

2 Reverse image & video

Where did this picture first appear?

Try Google Lens → **Exact matches**; TinEye → sort by oldest

Video screenshot a few frames and search each one

> Similar is not the same. Check the date inside each page.

3 Metadata

When and with what was this file made?

Try open the *original* file in `dedigger.com/tools/exif-viewer`

Read date taken, camera, GPS, editing software

> Easy to edit, and chat apps strip most of it. A clue, never proof.

4 Web archives

What did this page say before?

Try `web.archive.org/web/*/example.com`

Keep Save Page Now, or archive.today, for evidence

> Not every page is archived. Note the capture date you cite.

5 Domain records

How old is this website?

Try `lookup.icann.org` → creation date, registrar

Then compare with the Wayback Machine's first capture

> A hidden owner is normal. Age alone proves nothing.

6 Maps & satellite

Was this really taken here?

Try match two fixed features (a road, a building)

Past Google Earth Pro → Historical imagery; Copernicus Browser

> Many places look alike. Look for details that only fit one.

7 Shadows (chronolocation)

What time of day was this?

Try `suncalc.org`: set the place, date and time

Compare sun direction and shadow length with the photo

> You need a known place first. Clouds hide shadows.

8 Judging sources

Can I trust this?

Ask Who published it? How do they know? When?

Then does anyone independent confirm it?

> One source is a lead. Two independent ones that agree are evidence.

Keep a log as you go

What I found	Source	Link	Seen on	Archived copy

Say how sure you are: Confirmed | Likely | Possible | Unverified

Never

- Open, download or share data exposed by mistake. Tell the owner or CERT-In.
- Guess passwords or log in as someone else.
- Search for private people, their address or their family.
- Publish what you can't back up with a source.