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# How To Stalk Your Family

Lisa Lerer, 12.14.06, 4:03 PM ET



In Pictures: How To Stalk Your Family

They say you can never really escape your family. And new technology may make that aphorism a reality: Getting away from friends and loved ones may soon be impossible due to gadgets that track your every move.

This doesn't necessarily have to be as bad as it sounds. Parents may have legitimate reasons to keep tabs on their kids or watch over their own elderly parents. Then again, it's hard to come up with a rationale for pouring over your spouse's e-mail without sounding just a teeny bit creepy.

But no matter what your motives are, it is now easier to snoop than ever. GPS-enabled devices, which use satellite signals to track their location, have become increasingly popular: At least 500,000 mobile phone subscribers already have this ability, and that number will jump to an astonishing 20 million by 2011, ABI research predicts.

Meanwhile, new products give you access to e-mail, IM chats, both sides of phone conversations and secretly recorded video footage. And they're all easily bought online and on the cheap. "The equipment now is so readily available and it's inexpensive," says Tony Delorenzo, senior consultant at All State Investigations, a Freehold, N.J.-based private investigation firm.

## In Pictures: How To Stalk Your Family

Wondering where your sweetie has been?



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Give him or her a GPS cellphone equipped with location-based mapping and find out. New phones by Boost Mobile and Helio include "friend-finder" programs that let you see the real-time location of everyone in your phone book. If they use a Nextel phone, you may be able to install mapping software from Mologogo, which lets you track their moves via your laptop.

If you're more interested in tracking someone's car than their phone, consider a GPS tracking unit. The small devices attach via magnet to the underside of a vehicle and can send time-stamped reports and maps to your computer. Outfits like Freehold, N.J.-based All State Investigations will attach the gadget and monitor results for \$1500; you can do it yourself for around \$500.

Parents who want to keep tabs on their kids can give them phones from companies like Whereify Wireless. Whereify's pint-sized pink phone has just three buttons, so kids can call key numbers quickly. Parents can track the phone online and monitor incoming and outgoing calls. The phone will also send a text alert if the little bundle of joy violates curfew and goes beyond a set perimeter.

Location alone doesn't tell you exactly what your family members are doing. Install FlexiSpy on their mobile phones to get more details. For \$150, the software lets you listen in on calls, read the contents of all SMS text messages and see the call history. But be careful--some mobile phones' anti-virus software will detect it.

If you can't wait to see what your wife is buying you for Christmas, install tracking software on your PC: For \$149.99, software from eBlaster will keep tabs on what she types and what web sites she visits, and provide copies of every instant message and e-mail. That should be enough to figure out what you're getting.

Keep track of your kids with Loc8tor, a handheld radio frequency finder that will send a signal through walls. Stick one of the two-ounce tags on your rugrats and you'll be able to keep tabs on them within 600 feet.

Then again, not everyone wants to follow their family--some would prefer to avoid them. "All I hear is, 'in laws, in laws, in laws, I can't do it this year,'" says Michael DeMarco, vice president of marketing for Alibi Network, an Internet-based service that will provide excuses for your absence. For \$1500, the company will arrange a great escape, sending you a fake conference agenda, a virtual hotel number complete with a phony 24-hour receptionist, and even bogus e-tickets, hotel and car rental receipts. Once it's over, he'll e-mail out digital photos of you with conference participants. Too steep a price? A simple rescue call to get you out, at least for a while, costs just \$75.

Unfortunately, you can't pay off your conscience. If all the snooping and lying make you feel guilty, don't blame DeMarco. "We are just a service," he says. "It's not the technology that's at fault--it's the user and the motivations."

## In Pictures: How To Stalk Your Family

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