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A guide to the

Paperwork Reduction Act

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PRA and the Web

Using technology is an excellent way to reduce costs to the public while providing a useful service. Some social media and web-based technologies are not subject to the PRA, and don't need approval; broader clarifications are in the [Social Media Guidance Memo](#).

Email or text subscriptions to alerts and publications

The collection of mailing addresses, email addresses, or mobile numbers for newsletters, text alerts, agency updates, and other publications doesn't need PRA approval.

Wikis and collaborative drafting platforms

Web-based collaboration tools that facilitate interactions between the agency and the public and essentially provide a technology-based equivalent to in-person collaboration generally don't need PRA approval.

If they are used to collect information that an agency would otherwise gather by asking for responses to identical questions, however, they would need PRA approval.

Social networks, blogs, webinars, and other public meetings

Covered under the “public meetings” exclusion, these generally don’t need PRA approval, as long as the public is not surveyed or asked identical questions:

- Public conference calls
- Webinars
- Blogs
- Discussion boards
- Forums
- Chat sessions
- Social networks
- Online communities

User account creation

Profiles and accounts that only request an email address, username, password, and geographic location (e.g., state, region, or ZIP code) don’t need PRA approval. If more information is requested, it may need PRA approval, because the information requested likely goes beyond the scope of what’s needed to create an account.

Similarly, if the account is created to collect information for agency program purposes, like the [online Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#), it needs PRA approval.

Website display customization

Allowing users to customize or influence the look of an agency website, such as filtering navigation menu items and saving their preferences, doesn’t need PRA approval.

Ratings and rankings

Social media tools that let users vote on, rank, sort, organize, or otherwise rate the value of ideas, questions, and comments don’t need PRA approval. For example, you generally don’t need PRA clearance to solicit a user rating for an agency’s mobile app. If the results of the ratings can be used for policy or planning purposes, however, this would need PRA approval.

Voluntary commercial sales orders

Information about choosing, paying for, and delivering an item sold by the U.S. Government doesn’t need PRA approval. For example the payment information and delivery address collected to allow a member of the public to order a national park pass online.

Filtering agency data

Methods that let users sort and filter agency data, like drop down menus and standardized text or numeric entries, don’t need PRA approval.

Data calculation

Information collected to help users get details from a table or formula doesn’t need PRA approval, as long as that information isn’t used for another purpose. The [IRS’s Withholding Calculator](#) or [GSA’s Per Diem Lookup](#)

are good examples.

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Glossary

Search for a PRA term:

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- control number
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- fast-track
- Federal Register
- generic clearance
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- information collection
- information collection request
- non-substantive change
- OIRA
- OMB
- person
- PII
- PRA
- recordkeeping
- ROCIS
- sponsor
- the public