

WHAT IS THE **FREEDOM** OF **INFORMATION ACT?**

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requires Federal agencies to make specific records available on their websites and gives the public the right to request agency records. Federal courts, Congress, and many offices within the White House are not subject to FOIA.



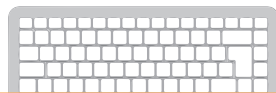
WHO FILES FOIA REQUESTS?

Anyone can file a FOIA request. Some people who use FOIA are journalists, historians, genealogists, researchers, students, corporations, and nonprofit organizations.



WHY WOULD I FILE A FOIA REQUEST?

The purpose of FOIA is to help the public better understand the government's actions. The law is also frequently used to learn more about family history, or to request copies of records people need for immigration-related processes or to apply for certain government benefits.



HOW DO I FILE A FOIA REQUEST?

Most agencies require that FOIA requests be made in writing. To find out how to submit a FOIA request to a particular agency, visit [FOIA.gov](https://www.foia.gov).



WHEN WILL I RECEIVE A RESPONSE TO MY FOIA REQUEST?

The law provides agencies 20 working days to respond to your request. However, responses can take a significantly longer time—especially if the agency has lots of records that might be responsive to your request or if it has to search several offices for responsive records. Before you file a FOIA request, be sure to look on the agency's website to see if the information you need is already public.



WHAT WILL AGENCIES RELEASE UNDER FOIA?

Agencies are required to release records that are responsive to your request unless they include information that is protected under the law. FOIA includes nine exemptions that allow agencies to withhold categories of records, including some law enforcement records, national security information, and some geological or geophysical information.

