Federal records are governed by the Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA. Each state has its own version of the law.

**STEP 1**
Find out which state or federal agency has the records you want.

**STEP 2**
Decide what to request. Most laws only cover existing records. Try asking for complete forms, contracts, databases, memos and reports. Check if they’ve already been released.

**STEP 3**
Draft and file your request. Be specific, so it’s easier for officials to find the records. Ask that your email be in writing and include a request for a preview of the records. Don’t hesitate to appeal a denial.

**STEP 4**
After you file, get a tracking number for your request. Don’t hesitate to follow up!

**STEP 5**
You get your record! Congratulations. How you use them is up to you.

Revealing Records: How to FOIA
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The Washington Post