



Access to fake IDs on the Net

It is no big deal for teenagers to get what they want, when they want. They want a drink to celebrate high school graduation? No sweat. All they have to do is go online and get an ID. This includes getting fake IDs that look so real you would swear it was the true blue government-issued, hologram-equipped thing.

The popularity of the fake ID was spurred by the 1984 federal law that increased the legal age for drinking alcohol from 18 to 21. Many fake ID purchasers are college students with more disposable income and freedom to do whatever they want, and the boom took off especially with the advent of the personal computer.

Cut and paste is the thing of the past. Now, (1) [fake ID makers use software](#) that can do anything but take out the garbage. It is not so strange if you think about it because even the most basic computer user can crop and paste images using very user friendly software. Expert forgers are probably getting fat behinds and laughing all the way to the bank with the access they can get to the most sophisticated software on the market.

There are two ways a fake ID can be had from the Internet. The first is to purchase a complete kit for making IDs. They come with a template that will be used for inserting the scanned photo, a color printer and a laminator. The templates will vary according to specifications; some are capable of inserting the requisite security holograms or bar codes as well as those faint shadows in the background, usually the insignia of the issuing office.

The second way is to simply order it from any number of websites offering instant, within 24-hours delivery of the ID of your choice, costing anywhere from \$10 to \$150, depending on the add-ons you request, such as hologram. Forgers may do this in a variety of ways/ One is simply scanning a real license, making the alteration, printing it out and then laminating it, but this is necessarily a bit crude when inspected closely. The really good replicas of the card-type IDs uses more sophisticated equipment and can hardly be detected even by experts. Any of these types of fake IDs and any quality in between are likely to be sufficient in conning a bartender, especially if the lights are low and the music loud. Some are so good they even fool police officers who are on the lookout for such jobs.

Authorities estimate that (2) [millions of the fake IDs are circulating](#) in the country, estimated at 50% of the high school and college student population. This is probably the case; otherwise, these online fake ID businesses would be out of business very quickly. A survey of those in the know have indicated that the easiest driver's licenses to copy or to have copied are those in New Jersey, Georgia, Vermont and Colorado, with the top slot occupied by New Jersey because the code is easily decipherable.

This has spurred an initiative to developing harder-to-duplicate IDs but the likelihood of this deterring forgery is small. Forgers will just get more sophisticated, muck like hackers stay one step ahead of any type of security upgrade software programmers are wont to install. Even the ability to use scanners linked to a database is not much of a deterrent as this can be circumvented by going to places without the proposed \$45 scanner. It is also just a matter of time before the code is broken.

Tougher penalties for those violating the federal Internet False Identification Prevention Act of 2000 were enforced, focusing on websites offering DIY kits. Convicted felons can face jail time of up to 20 years if caught using a template for the production of five or more fake IDs. The law had caused a reduction of the sites to less than 2,000, but that only means these sites are doing more business than ever. Many are based outside the US to avoid prosecution.



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The only recourse for law enforcers is to keep a stricter eye out for potential fake ID carriers and slap sanctions on them to discourage the practice. Those who get caught are made to pay fines up to \$ 2,500, do jail time or community service, and get their driver's licenses suspended for up to a year. Remember, penalties vary depends on which state you are from. However, going after millions of teenagers who are probably more computer savvy is probably a Herculean task.

Despite the risks, websites are continuing to over the service to millions of impatient youngsters. If the money is there, no amount of legislation will stem the transactions. And with millions of growing children ready to take their first sip of beer or their first joyride, you can be sure the market will be there for a long time.

(1) http://www.hackcanada.com/canadian/scams/beginners_fake-id.html

(2) <http://www.siue.edu/ALESTLE/library/FALL2000/september26/fakeid.html>