



Top Ten Tips to Protect Your Personal Information and Identity

When you go online for emailing, instant messaging (IM), shopping, and banking, you often communicate personal information such as addresses, phone numbers, account numbers, usernames, and passwords. Unfortunately, you risk having this personal information and possibly even your identity stolen, or having your PC used as a launching pad for hackers to attack others.

Follow these top ten tips to protect yourself and your computer:

- 1. Invest in trusted, multi-faceted security software.** Look for comprehensive, multi-faceted PC security software that protects you from viruses, spyware, adware, hackers, unwanted emails, phishing scams, and identity theft. Choose a brand that you can trust, like McAfee®.
- 2. Always access the Internet from behind a firewall.** A firewall adds a security layer between your PC and the Internet, and helps stop hackers from stealing your identity, destroying your files, or using your PC to attack others.
- 3. Use a PC you know is secure.** Hackers can easily retrieve sensitive data that is sent over an unsecured Internet connection. If you need to send sensitive information or make an online transaction, use a PC that you know is secure and remember that there are many flavors of security. Some computers only have the bare minimum while others, like those with McAfee Total Protection™, have comprehensive security.
- 4. Watch out for phishing scams.** Phishing scams use fraudulent emails and web sites, masquerading as legitimate businesses, to lure unsuspecting consumers into revealing private account or login information. Even if you have PC security, you still might visit a malicious web site without knowing it. Legitimate businesses will never ask you to update your personal information via email. Always verify web addresses before submitting your personal information.
- 5. Secure your wireless network.** You are at risk if you access the Internet from a Wi-Fi network. Since your wireless network's radio waves travel through walls, a hacker with a simple antenna could attack you from miles away to steal your information and use your wireless network for their own communication. Always use additional Wi-Fi security protection.

- 6. Never install potentially unwanted programs (PUPs) like spyware or adware on your PC.** Many free programs that you download via the Internet, while appearing to be harmless, are specifically designed to be malicious and monitor your keystrokes, track your Internet logins, transmit your confidential information, or redirect your browser to fake sites. Some of these programs can also be installed on your machine simply by clicking on an advertisement link on the Internet. With security software, you can stop these programs from installing. Never willingly install programs unless you are familiar with the web site and program and have read the end-user license agreement thoroughly.
- 7. Do not answer chain email.** Even with PC security, some chain email forwarded by your friends might ask for personal information. Do not download files from friends and family unless you know the content of the file and know that it is secure.
- 8. Monitor your credit reports and be aware.** At least once a year, check your credit history. This is one of the best ways to find out if someone is using your personal finance information without your knowledge. Visit the Gateway support site for the latest tips to keeping your computer safety or the Federal Trade Commission's site to keep abreast of the latest trends in identify theft.
- 9. Monitor your children's online activity.** Limit your children's time spent online. Install and use parental controls software that allows you to monitor your children's online activity as well as prevent them from accessing undesirable web sites and sharing personal information via online communications.
- 10. Make regular backups of critical data.** Keep a copy of important files on removable media such as Zip disks or recordable CD-ROM disks (CD-R or CD-RW disks). Use software backup tools if available, and store the backup disks in case of an emergency.



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