

10 ways to be smart when it comes to Internet security

- 1 Be a good cyber citizen.**
Being a citizen of the cyber community brings responsibilities: to surf safely, to use good manners, and to respect laws regulating Internet usage.
- 2 Protect your computer from viruses.**
Computer viruses can invade your computer and damage it, or destroy information. Be sure to use a good anti-virus program, and update it regularly. Get regular updates for your software as well.
- 3 Never open email from unknown sources.**
Don't worry about where it came from, just delete it. Watch out for any files attached to emails, especially if the file has an ".exe" extension. They could be files that transport and distribute viruses or programs that can permanently delete some of your files or damage your computer. In general, you should not forward email if you are not 100% sure that the attachments are safe.
- 4 Don't use obvious passwords.**
Passwords that are easy to guess (like a family member's name) are not a good idea. Pick a password that is not obvious, and keep it safe – don't write it down or share it with anyone else. While you're at it, make sure that any screen name you use doesn't identify you to strangers.
- 5 Don't let strangers have access to your computer.**
You wouldn't give a stranger the key to your house - don't let strangers have access to your computer, either. If you are part of a network, others could access your hard-drive in order to share files, and then your computer could be infected with a virus. Check your operating system or program help files to learn how to disable file-sharing.
- 6 Back up your computer regularly.**
Any files that you would hate to lose should be backed up onto external media devices such as CDs or diskettes. If your computer crashes, you'll still have the files you saved onto disk.
- 7 Protect your computer with firewalls.**
A firewall helps to prevent hackers from breaking into your computer, and helps to prevent thieves from stealing and using private information such as credit card numbers which you might have stored on your computer. The "Help" feature of your control panel may show you how to turn on the firewall.
- 8 Disconnect from the Internet when you're not using it.**
The Internet is a two-way highway, where you get information as well as send it. Turning off the Internet makes certain that someone else who is online can't get into your computer and do harm. If you're not using the Internet, log off – that makes it less likely that someone can gain access to your computer.
- 9 Get regular downloads of security protection updates.**
Companies that make software release quick fixes called "patches" that help to fix security flaws in operating systems and applications. It is a good idea to check for security updates for any software that you have installed. You should be able to find updates on the manufacturer's website.
- 10 Check computer security on a regular basis.**
At least twice a year, evaluate your computer security. An easy way to remember is to do it when you change clocks for daylight savings time.