Tips for Protecting Online Privacy

There are a number of practical ways to protect your personal information online.

- Be careful: think twice about with whom, and where, you share your personal information such as your name, age, address, email, telephone number, or social insurance number.

- If you buy something from a Web site, give the site only the minimum information necessary for the transaction.

- Question why a business wants your personal information. Make it clear that you don't want it shared with, or sold to, any third party.

- If a site asks for your personal information, and asks you to click on an "I Agree" button, don't automatically agree. Take the time to read user agreements carefully because once marketers have your data, you lose control over how it's collected, stored and used.

- If you are making purchases online, make sure that the Web pages where you provide personal and financial information are secure. (Look for the "https" notation in the URL, and the "locked" padlock icon in the corner of your screen.)

- Find and read the privacy policies and terms of use of the Web sites you use. These explain what personal information sites collect and how they use it, as well as who owns any content that users post. (Hint: it's not always the user!)

- Never do business with any online business that doesn't post a clear privacy policy on its site.

- Make sure that your computer's file-sharing and printer-sharing options are turned off.

- Always use virus-scanning software, and make sure it's always up to date.

- After browsing online, clear your memory cache.

- Get a separate account for personal email; encrypt your email messages; and use an anonymous re-mailer.

- Adjust your computer settings to reject unnecessary or unwanted cookies.

- Don't give out any more information than necessary when registering for a site or entering a contest or survey. Check to see what information you have to give and what's optional.

- Always sign out of websites that require a login such as Facebook and Twitter.

- Think twice before posting anything online. Remember that whatever you post may be seen by unexpected audiences.

- Keep tabs on your online identity by occasionally looking yourself up with a search engine such as Google and checking for duplicate profiles on Facebook and other social networks.

I Can Build a Secure Online Identity

1. What do the privacy settings on social networking sites actually control?

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2. How should you set your privacy settings? Why?

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3. What information should you **not** post on a social networking site? Give at least three examples.

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4. What should you consider before posting something to a social networking site? List at least three examples.

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5. How can you decide whether or not to make someone a "friend" on Facebook? Give at least two things you might consider.

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