

Learn About PC and Online Security

General PC Security

- **Update your software frequently** to ensure you have the latest security patches. This includes your computer's operating system and other installed software (e.g. Web Browsers, Adobe Flash Player, Adobe Reader, Java, Microsoft Office, etc.).
- **Automate software updates**, to when the software supports it, to ensure updates are not overlooked.
- **Maintain active and up-to-date antivirus protection** provided by a reputable vendor. Schedule regular scans of your computer in addition to real-time scanning.
- **Update your software frequently** to ensure you have the latest security patches. This includes your computer's operating system and other installed software (e.g. Web Browsers, Adobe Flash Player, Adobe Reader, Java, Microsoft Office, etc.).
- **If you suspect your computer is infected with malware**, discontinue using it for banking, shopping, or other activities involving sensitive information. Use security software and/or professional help to find and remove malware.
- **Use firewalls** on your local network to add another layer of protection for all the devices that connect through the firewall (e.g. PCs, smartphones, and tablets).
- **Require a password to gain access.** Log off or lock your computer when not in use.
- **Use a cable lock to physically secure laptops** when these devices are stored in an untrusted location.

General Online Security

- **Never click on suspicious links** in emails, tweets, posts, or online advertising. Links can take you to a different website than their labels indicate. Typing an address in your browser instead of clicking a link in an email is a safer alternative.
- **Only give sensitive information to websites using encryption** so your information is protected as it travels across the Internet. Verify the web address begins with "https://" (the "s" is for secure) rather than just "http://." Some browsers also display a closed padlock.
- **Do not trust sites with certificate warnings or errors.** These messages could be caused by your connection being intercepted or the web server misrepresenting its identity.
- **Avoid using public computers or public wireless access points** for online banking and other activities involving sensitive information when possible.
- **Always "sign out" or "log off"** of password protected websites when finished to prevent unauthorized access. Simply closing the browser window may not actually end your session.
- **Be cautious of unsolicited phone calls, emails, or texts** directing you to a website or requesting sensitive information.

Password Best Practices

- **Never share your password over the phone, in texts, by email, or in person.** If you are asked for your password, it's probably a scam.
- **Use unpredictable passwords** with a combination of lowercase letters, capital letters, numbers, and special characters.
- **The longer the password, the tougher it is to crack.** Use a password with a minimum of eight and maximum of 12 characters.
- **Avoid using obvious passwords** such as:
 - your name
 - your business name
 - family member names
 - your username
 - birthdates
 - dictionary words
- **Choose a password you can remember without writing it down. If you do choose to write it down,** store it in a secure location.

Mobile Device Security

- **Configure your device to require a passcode to gain access** if this feature is supported in your device.
- **Avoid storing sensitive information.** Mobile devices have a high likelihood of being lost or stolen so you should avoid using them to store sensitive information (e.g. passwords, bank account numbers, etc.). If sensitive data is stored then encryption should be used to secure it.
- **Keep your mobile device's software up-to-date.** These devices are small computers running software that needs to be updated just as you would update your PC. Use the automatic update option if one is available.
- **Review the privacy policy and data access of any applications (apps)** before installing them.
- **Disable features not actively in use such as Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and infrared.** Set Bluetooth-enabled devices to non-discoverable when Bluetooth is enabled.
- **Delete all information stored on a device before the device changes ownership.** Use a "hard factory reset" to permanently erase all content and settings stored on the device.
- **"Sign out" or "Log off" when finished with an app** rather than just closing it.