

Top 6 Ways to Stay Safe Online

Stay up-to-date, stay paranoid, stay protected. That's the message from the security experts. Here are a few of their top tips and suggestions for protecting your computer against malware and hackers.

1) Keep up on patches.

Be sure to update your Browser when prompted, as well as the software update features in the other programs that you use every day. If you are unsure if the pop-up message to update now is genuine, go directly to the program itself and check to see if there are updates available. How this is done will vary with each program.

2) Be password smart.

As tempting as it is to use the same password in multiple places, DON'T. And use longer passwords - they're harder to crack. If you have lots of accounts to manage, use a password manager. NEVER create a text document with all your passwords and save it in your computer! And Never, Never use your email password anywhere else!

3) Use security software.

Surprisingly many of our clients are not even sure what security programs they have installed, if any. We recommend Malware Bytes Anti-Malware in addition to your chosen Anti-Virus software. Be sure to run scans at least once per month with all your protection software tools.

4) Don't Over Google It! If you know the business or website name you wish to visit, type it directly in the URL field. Don't Google Search It! There are hundreds of thousands of hackers who create "copy cat" websites and pretend to be the "genuine site". Why take the risk of clicking on a risky search result. Example: If you want to find HP Tech Support, type HP.COM in the URL field and when you arrive at their site, click the Support link.

5) If it sounds too good to be true... well, you know the rest.

No, someone in a faraway land isn't really offering you millions of dollars. No, attractive women from Russia probably aren't seeking you out specifically. No, those aren't magic cure-all pills. And NO, FREE stuff isn't really free. You pay with stolen data and privacy invasion 95%

6) Assume that everyone's out to get you.

PC security is one area where it pays to be paranoid. Just remember that no security software is fail-safe, and that you're still the one sitting at the keyboard. Assume that no site is safe. And don't automatically trust a link or file download, even if a friend sends it to you.

And a few final thoughts:

From Eric Howes, director of research services for security firm GFI Software:

"The user is always the weak link. Even the best antimalware protection and security patches cannot protect a PC from malware if the user sitting at the keyboard is being irresponsible while surfing the Web."