Protecting Your Information in an Increasingly Connected World

Nearly every transaction you make (online or offline) involves handing over some form of personal information.

Whether you're making an in-store purchase, using a rideshare service like Uber, or exchanging your email address for a promotional code, you take risks with your data privacy every day. Everyone should understand the basics of data privacy and learn how to protect themselves.

Here are some best practices that might come up in your day-to-day:

Securing Devices

- Understand how robocalls and phone/email scams work so you can avoid accidentally revealing private information to scammers.
- Be wise about Wi-Fi. Before you send personal information from your laptop or smartphone on a public wireless network, confirm that your information will be protected.
- Don't open files, click on links, or download programs sent by strangers.
- Use security and privacy settings on websites and apps to manage what is shared about you and who sees it.
- Store your laptop in a secure location when not in use—never leave it in your car overnight or unattended in a public place.

Shopping Online

- Prior to making a purchase, read reviews from others about the merchant. In addition, look for a physical location and any customer service information.
- Use a credit card rather than a debit card; there are more consumer protections for credit cards if something goes awry. Or, you can use a third-party payment service instead of your credit card.
- If a merchant is requesting more personal information than you feel comfortable sharing, cancel the transaction. You only need to fill out required fields at checkout, and you should not save your payment information to your profile.
- Monitor spending activity by setting up alerts. That way, if your credit card is used, you will receive an email or text message with the transaction details so you can keep an eye on any unauthorized activity.

Social Media

- Be cautious about how much personal information you provide on social networking sites. The more information you post, the easier it may be for a hacker to use that information to steal your identity.
- When applicable, set the privacy and security settings on websites to your comfort level for information sharing. It's acceptable to limit how and with whom you share information.
- Protect your reputation on social networks. What you post online stays online.

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