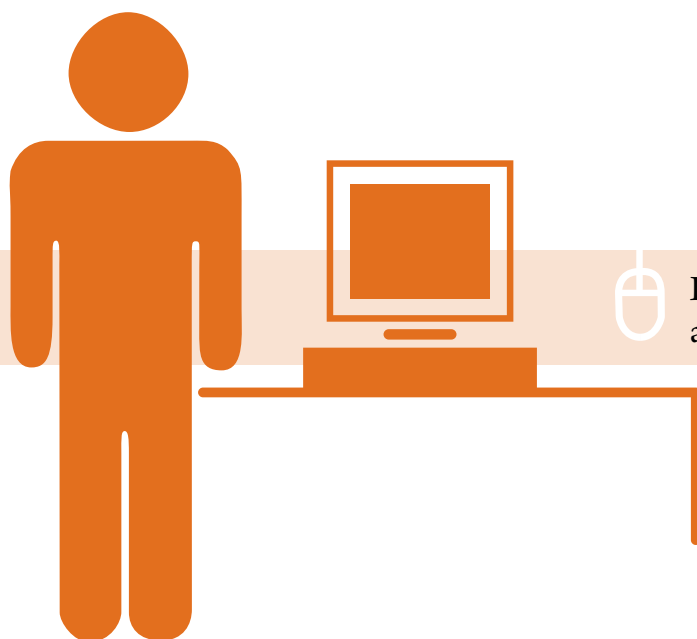


BE INFORMED ABOUT ...

# Internet Safety

Safety Net



Log on to [www.ConsumerInformation.ca](http://www.ConsumerInformation.ca)  
and take a tour of the site.

Produced by the  
Federal-Provincial-Territorial  
Consumer Measures Committee

## Doing Business Over the Internet

The Internet has changed our lives. We can now get news and information at the click of a mouse. Friends and relatives who live many kilometers apart can email instantly. Consumers can shop and pay bills from home.

The Internet is great, but it has risks. There is spam, “phishing” and spyware. Scam artists use these tools to watch what you do on the Internet. They are looking for personal information about you and your money. If you want to use the Internet, learn how these scams work. There are ways to use the Internet safely.

### Protect your personal information

Your personal information is very valuable. When you shop online, you give the seller information about yourself. You tell them your name, your address, email address and phone number. The seller may need this information to complete your order. Sometimes, the company will sell your information to another company without asking your permission. Before you know it, you start getting emails from people and companies you don’t know.

Some companies use your personal information only to complete your order. They may also keep your information so they can send you ads, coupons or special offers.

You can find out how a company will use your information — go to their privacy policy. The privacy policy will tell you if they will share your information or sell it to anyone else. You will usually find the company’s privacy policy at the bottom of the website’s home page. To learn more about how companies must protect your personal information, visit the website of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada at [www.privcom.gc.ca](http://www.privcom.gc.ca).

### Protect your passwords

If someone knows or can guess your passwords, they can pretend to be you. They can use your computer and email accounts. Do everything you can to protect your passwords. Don’t share the passwords with anyone. Keep them private, just like the PIN (personal identification number) you use with your bank card.

Make your passwords hard for someone to guess. Don’t use your real name, your birth date or other personal information. Try this tip: use a phrase or a series of letters and numbers that you can easily remember but that would be hard for others to guess. For example, pick a phrase such as “All dogs have four legs.” Use the first letter of each word along with the number as your password: A D H 4 L .

**Your personal information is very valuable.**

**You can find out how a company will use your information — go to their privacy policy.**

**Don’t share passwords with anyone.**



## The facts on “phishing”

Phishing is a trick. Identity thieves use this trick to get your personal or banking information.

The trick works like this. The thief sends you an email that looks like an important message from a well known business or your bank. The message may ask you to type in your login name, password or credit card number. It will tell you that you must respond right away. Many phishing messages threaten you — for example, it may say that your account will be blocked if you do not provide the information. The message will have a link for you to connect with their online system to verify your personal information.

Don't click the link! A real company or bank will never contact you this way. If you get an email like this, don't be fooled. Delete the email. If you have doubts, phone the company or bank. Look up the number in the phone book or check a statement or bill you have at home. There might be a phone number in the email, but don't use it — it might be fake as well.

## Beware of spam

Spam is the term for junk mail that comes in as email. When you check your email, you may find messages from a company or charity you don't know. You didn't ask for it, and you don't know who sent it to you.

Spam messages can carry viruses that can hurt your computer. Sometimes the content can be offensive. Use the following tips to protect yourself and your family from spam:

- Delete spam messages immediately.
- Don't open spam emails.
- Don't respond to a spam email.
- Don't click on a “remove” or “unsubscribe” link. This action tells the sender that you have a valid email address. You will only receive more spam.
- Don't open an email attachment unless you are expecting one from someone you trust. An attachment can contain a virus that can damage your computer. If you want to know if an attachment is safe, check with the person who sent it.
- Don't forward email attachments unless you know they are virus-free.
- Install and subscribe to anti-spam and anti-virus programs on your computer.
- Always disconnect from the Internet when you are finished what you're doing and shut down your computer.

**Spam is the term for junk mail that comes in as email.**

**Spam messages can carry viruses that can hurt your computer.**

**Children and teens should be reminded to be careful about giving out their personal information on social networking sites, chat rooms and blogs.**

### Online shopping by children and teens

Children and teens may buy things that turn out to be not as big or as much fun as they looked online. They may also give out personal information without knowing the harm it can cause.

Children and teens should be reminded to be careful about giving out their personal information on social networking sites, chat rooms and blogs. If they shop online, you and your child or teen need to know about the websites where they shop. You should also know who to contact if their order doesn't arrive or if they wish to return the item.



**Need more information? Here are links to some websites that can help you and your family use the Internet safely:**

- “Online Shopping” section of the *Canadian Consumer Handbook* (available at [www.ConsumerInformation.ca](http://www.ConsumerInformation.ca))
- Stop Spam Here ([www.stopspamhere.ca](http://www.stopspamhere.ca))
- Online Shopping Assistant (available by searching [www.ConsumerInformation.ca](http://www.ConsumerInformation.ca))

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