

What are you doing to protect your privacy?



Office of the
Privacy Commissioner
of Canada

10 Tips for Protecting Personal Information

1. Think twice

Whether online or face-to-face, you are asked to provide personal data at every turn. Don't turn it over blindly. Think about why the information is required, how it may be used and by whom. Remember, the Net never forgets. Once information is out there, it's very difficult to get back. Think of the impact certain comments or images could have on your reputation or the reputation of others. Respect other people's privacy.

2. Ask questions

Get in the habit of reading privacy policies associated with the websites and apps you use. Companies should be able to answer any questions you have about how your information will be used and protected. If they can't, or you don't like what you hear, this should raise red flags.

3. Speak up

If you have concerns about the personal information handling practices of an organization, your first step should be to bring it to their attention. Most organizations are sensitive to consumer concerns about privacy. In many cases, a concern you have about how your personal information has been handled by an organization can be quickly and effectively addressed if you raise it directly with them. Positive change to the general policies or practices of an organization are more likely when people speak up.

4. Just say no

Consider subscribing to the [National Do Not Call List](#) to avoid telemarketers. Check off the "no thanks" box on forms when asked to provide personal information or leave a brief note stating your refusal to be contacted. You can also get your name removed from many mailing and telephone lists by writing to the [Canadian Marketing Association](#). Report email solicitations that are fraudulent or misleading or that you did not consent to receiving. It may be [spam and the sender may be breaking the law](#).

5. Safeguard your SIN

Your [Social Insurance Number](#) is confidential and should only be collected and used for income reporting purposes. Avoid sharing it with private-sector organizations or individuals such as landlords.

6. Protect your devices

Ensure your [computer, smartphone and other mobile devices](#) are password protected. Only download from reputable sources. Install the latest anti-virus, anti-spam and firewall programs – and ensure you keep them up to date. Consider encrypting sensitive data. Disable Wi-Fi and Bluetooth if not using it. Data is vulnerable when passing through public spaces with open wireless networks. Don't leave mobile devices unattended.

7. Protect your passwords

Ensure [passwords](#) are hard-to-guess. Make them eight or more characters. Use a combination of letters, numbers and symbols. Use different passwords for different websites, apps and devices. Change passwords regularly. Don't write them down or share them with others.

8. Get to know privacy settings

Mobile devices, browsers, sites/apps and other web-enabled items such as [video games](#) and [cameras](#) often have adjustable privacy settings. For devices, this may include the ability to control everything from location tracking to screen locks. For browsers, users can often control things like [cookies](#) and pop-ups, while apps and websites such as [social media sites](#) generally allow users to control what personal information others can see about them. Be sure to review and adjust privacy settings regularly and never rely on default settings.

9. Discard with discretion

Make sure data stored on devices you no longer use is properly [purged before recycling or discarding](#). When doing business with a particular company, be cognizant of its personal information retention periods and disposal practices. Ask questions if you are uncertain.

10. Know your rights

Read up on the [basics of Canada's federal privacy laws](#): the [Privacy Act](#), which applies to the personal information handling practices of federal government institutions, and the [Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act \(PIPEDA\)](#), Canada's federal private sector privacy law. Remember, you have the right to access and correct your personal information.

[Further information](#) about how to protect your privacy is available on the website of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. [Provincial and territorial privacy oversight offices](#) also offer privacy information on their websites.