

Mastering our Digital; Recovering the Real World. Five Ways to Protect Privacy

The world is getting smaller as technology expands at lightning speed bringing exciting innovation. It is indeed a brave new world. But as we gain access to vast and unfettered information we are becoming more vulnerable than ever before. Privacy and security worries are increasing. Here are some simple ways to increase personal privacy.

1. **Be Smart With Your Smartphone.** These wonderful devices are tracking more than you probably know. By using a smartphone you are giving up most elements of the privacy you treasure. They collect information about you even with the pictures you take of family and friends. Stay aware of what your phone is tracking and doing. Check it out at this link: <https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/phone-privacy/>
2. **Protect Your Passwords.** It is impossible to remember all of the passwords we set up. But overused ones are more easily accessed by strangers and predators. Get a password vault or manager to save and generate passwords that will save you lots of headaches and trouble. Here is a link to the best ones available. <https://www.digitaltrends.com/computing/best-password-managers/>
3. **Pay in Cash.** It should be obvious by now that folks who issue credit cards are selling your personal information. If you want for your buying patterns to be your own business, slow down the online purchasing. Get your money at the bank and spend it the way we used to...with dollars and cents (sense).
4. **Be Email, Message and Call Savvy.** If you don't know the sender of an electronic mail, don't open it. Be especially careful about opening any attachments. This is how phishing works. All of your information is at risk when you aren't careful. The same goes for responding to callers on phones (even landlines). If you don't know who is calling, don't answer. They will leave a message if it is important.
5. **Guard Your Social Security Number.** It seems like everyone would like the last four numbers of your SSN. Be very cautious and wary unless it is your bank or the IRS. The fact is that predators of all kinds can figure out the rest of your number with the last four and your birthplace.

There are dozens of other ways to make yourself safer and to protect your privacy. Social media profiles should be very limited in terms of your personal information. Make sure devices have a password or thumbprint requirement for opening. Enable private browsing on your search engine. Set up a Google alert for your name at <https://www.google.com/alerts>. Take some time to investigate the different measures you might want to take by checking out trusted sources.

Government and commercial entities are only partly to blame for compromising privacy in the digital age. The bulk of the responsibility rests with each of us. You really have the power to balance your own safety and privacy.