Protecting Your Data

Best Practices

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Ways You Can Protect Your Data

Be Strategic With Usernames and Passwords

Do

- Create passwords that are long and strong, using 8-15 characters, upper- and lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters.
- Use a unique password for each account to prevent a quick and invasive attack on all of your accounts, known as credential replay.
- Change your password often. (General rule of thumb: Change passwords every 90 days.)
- Where available, take advantage of two-factor authentication for accessing your accounts.

Don't

- Use information that can be easily found about you online or otherwise.
- Share passwords with others.
- Store your passwords online.
- Use any part of your Social Security number, birthdate, or other personal data when creating passwords.

Surf Safely

Do

- Use wireless networks you trust and know are protected.
- Be cautious when using public computers.
- Ensure you are downloading legitimate apps from trusted publishers.
- Be aware that secure websites start with **https**, not http.
- Be sure to log out completely (which terminates access) when exiting all websites to prevent cybercriminals from obtaining your personal information.
- Consider purchasing a personal Wi-Fi hot spot.
- Hover over questionable links to reveal the true destination before clicking.

Don't

- Use public computers to access confidential information or accounts, or to perform financial transactions.
- Click on websites you don't know or on pop-up ads or banners.

Protect Your Money

Do

- Review your credit card, cell phone, and financial statements as soon as they are available.
- Contact your financial institution if you see anything suspicious on your statements.
- Help us protect your information and assets by following our guidelines for identification verification and procedures for transferring funds.
- Opt for voice authentication as an added layer of protection when available.

Don’t

- Send your personal identifiable information or account information via unsecure channels like email, chat, or text.
- Respond to requests for personal information from an unsolicited email or from an unsolicited incoming phone call.

Limit What You Share Online

Do

- Be very selective about the information you choose to share on social media and with whom you choose to share it.
- Keep your personal information private (home address, phone number, and birthdate).
- Set privacy and security settings on web services and devices to your comfort level for sharing.

Don't

- Post personal information about family and friends online.

Safeguard Email Accounts

Do

- Exercise caution when reviewing unsolicited email.
- Obtain secure storage programs to archive sensitive, private data, and documents instead of storing emails.
- Create separate email accounts specifically for financial transactions.
- Delete all emails that include financial information.
- Cautiously evaluate the risk versus convenience of transferring confidential information by email.

Don't

- Do not click on the links or pop-up ads in unsolicited emails, as these links may pass on viruses.

Keep Equipment Up to Date

Do

- Install the most up-to-date antivirus and anti-spyware software on all devices that connect to the Internet (e.g., PCs, laptops, tablets, smartphones)
- Set each device to run regular scans to update software.
- Ensure you've installed the latest versions of your software and your patches are up to date.
- Make sure your networking equipment and computers are all still supported by the manufacturer.
- Recycle, exchange, or dispose of your old mobile device safely by:
  - backing up your data,
  - performing a secure erase (factory reset) or have the device vendor wipe your device,
  - removing SIM and SD cards from your cell phone and transfer to new phone or destroy.

Don't

- Don't purchase any networking devices secondhand.
- Forget to set up a passcode or PIN and auto-lock on your mobile devices.
- Use free or found USB drives, as they typically are infected with malware.

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