Social Networking Safely

Social networking sites are powerful tools that allow you to communicate with friends and family and share with people around the world. However, be careful what you share and with whom.
Social networking websites are one of the most exciting technologies on the Internet. What makes these sites so powerful is how easy it is to share with others and to watch and learn what others are doing. However, you need to be aware that there are risks that come with these amazing capabilities. Here we will cover some simple steps you can take to protect yourself online.

Sharing Your Information

Social networking websites allow you to post and share a tremendous amount of information. Not only can you publish basic personal data, but also favorite songs and movies, personal photos and events in your life. The concern is that sharing all this information can harm you if you’re not careful.

Criminals and attackers look for highly personal information. They may be able to guess your passwords, impersonate you online or even steal your identity based on the details of your life you’ve shared. You should never post personal details, such as your birth date, home address or identification numbers, online. In addition, organizations hiring new employees or universities reviewing new students often do background checks on popular social networking sites, such as Facebook. To protect your future, do not post any embarrassing information or photos of yourself. If it is something you would not want your boss or family to see, you should simply not post it.

Also, be careful of what others share about you. Your friends may be posting confidential information or personal photos of you. Ask them to be considerate of your privacy and track what they are sharing about you. If they post anything you feel is inappropriate, ask them to remove the content or report it to the website’s abuse department.

Trusting Others

Cyber attackers may attempt to fool you on social networking sites, just like they do in email or instant messaging. A common attack on sites like Facebook or Twitter is for a criminal to hack into a person’s account and post messages pretending to be that person.

For example, your friend may post that he was just mugged while traveling overseas and lost all of his money and documentation. He desperately needs help and asks if you or anyone else can transfer some money right away. The problem is that your friend was never mugged. In fact, he was never even traveling. Instead, someone hacked into your friend’s Facebook account and posted the fake message while pretending to be him. Just like with email, if you get suspicious messages on a social networking site from a friend, call them to confirm if they posted the message or not.
Third Party Apps and Games

Some social networking websites have additional third-party programs, such as games you can install. These programs are usually not developed or reviewed by the social networking website. Instead, other individuals or organizations develop them independently. Always be careful when using third-party programs, as they can potentially infect your computer or access your private information.

Work Information

Do not post any confidential information about our organization on any websites. If you have any questions about what you can or cannot post about work, please ask your supervisor. In addition, be sure you are not using any of your work passwords for your social networking accounts; these personal accounts should have different passwords. This way, if any of the social networking websites you use are hacked, your work passwords are still secure.

Your Privacy Settings

Most social networking sites offer privacy controls. These are settings you can configure to determine who can and cannot access information on your page. The problem with most privacy controls is that they are complex; it is too easy to make mistakes. You may think your information is protected, only to discover that anyone can access it. Even once you figure out how the privacy options work and configure them accordingly, they often change. Finally, if any of your friends’ accounts become compromised, your information may be accessible by the attacker. The best way to protect yourself is to assume any information you post will eventually become public, regardless of the privacy controls you use. If you do not want your boss, coworkers or family members to find out about it, you shouldn’t post it.