

A Secure Home Computer Is Possible

There are many people who still harbor great fears about the security of the information they have on their computer. Let's face it, there have been so many films and tv programs in which computers have been easily hacked into, that it's no real surprise that people maintain their suspicions. Rest assured, though - online computer security is possible - you can make your home computer safe and secure, without being an expert and without it costing you a fortune. There are seven basic areas for you to concentrate upon and the easiest way to examine them is to go through them in the order in which you should actually carry them out.

- 1 Anti-virus and anti-spyware software - There is a difference between the two and both need attention. For example, a computer virus is computer code implanted into your computer by someone else and which can be transferred amongst computers. Like a biological virus, it can 'spread' itself and some famous examples of computer viruses have done incredible amounts of damage by destroying file systems in thousands of computers. A spyware program, as its name implies, is one which can gather information from your computer - without you even knowing about it, let alone permitting it. It is, thankfully, a straightforward matter to install anti-virus and anti-spyware software onto your home computer which will perform their functions completely to stop rogue viruses and spies invading your privacy. It is best to carry out this procedure the very first time you intend to go 'on line'.
- 2 Computer Firewall - When you install your anti-virus software, it will have a firewall - a means of stopping direct communications between your own computer and anybody else's without your permission. In other words, a computer hacker will not be able to break through into your system. If you have a computer which operates using Microsoft Windows XP service Pack 2 or a Macintosh OS X, then you will find it has its own firewall pre-installed for you. All you need to do then is to ensure that you read the instruction booklet thoroughly to find out if it is automatically enacted or whether you have to turn it on yourself.
- 3 Software Updates - It is essential that you keep your anti-virus, anti-spyware software and your firewall as up-to-the-minute as possible. The producers of these materials are constantly upgrading them to make sure they stay one step ahead of potential hackers. Therefore, in order to benefit from these updates, turn on the automatic updates feature provided by the software manufacturers so that you immediately receive the latest technological assistance. It's a sad but true fact that hackers have such sophisticated equipment that they can scour computers to locate unprotected machines but if your software is up-to-date they will simply move on from yours to search for others. You don't want your information held in the computer to be available to others - be it online banking details or Paypal accounts and you don't want people breaking into your system to send Spam emails from your email address. Keeping your software updated will help prevent this from occurring.
- 4 Storing Computer Information - It might be that, some time in the future, you will need to bring in a technician to reset, restore, upgrade or repair your computer, in which case you will need your computer's technical data to enable this to be carried out safely. With Windows, all you need to do is to click Start and then select to Run. You will be presented with a window in which you should type msinfo32 which will offer you a system window. Once here, select the File Menu and then go to Export, which will enable you to put all the system information onto a CD for safe storage and easy future access. If you have a different operating system, you can Google the method of undertaking a similar storage procedure for your specific system.
- 5 Backing Up Files - Don't underestimate the value of backing up your most precious information. Imagine the potential problems you would have should you lose, for any reason, the information you store on your computer. Securely stored back up CDs could make life a whole lot more straightforward.
- 6 Passwords - There's a terrible tendency to choose passwords that are predictable for other people to work out. Whenever you need to select a password - for online banking, Paypal or whatever, make sure you choose what is termed a strong password. In other words, don't choose your cat's name, your street name and number, or something that could be worked out by someone with just a little knowledge. Instead, choose something that is, in effect, not a word with which people would ever connect you. And don't write it down on a piece of paper stuck to your desk!
- 7 Protecting Personal Information - There are sure to be occasions when you will be required to enter personal information into your computer when you are online. It might be that you are opening an account or buying something with a credit card or simply registering to a site but you might well be asked to enter information such as your home address, telephone numbers, and other highly confidential data. As long as you are really careful, you should have no problems. You must assess why this information is needed and how it is going to be used by the company requiring it. Make sure that the site you are giving your information to is fully and securely encrypted. You can check this because, normally, the site's URL will start with https rather than the customary http. If you right click and then select the option labeled Properties, you should see a Connection section which tells you 128 bit encryption (High) and that there is a 1024 bit exchange. It's also worth noting that authentic emails will not usually require you to log in to a site by directly clicking onto a link in the email rather than by entering your password. It's always advisable to enter your account by logging in fully through the official website, even though it might seem as if it would be quicker clicking a direct link. This might seem like a lot of information to absorb with regard to online security but, in reality, most of it is easily accessible and straightforward and, let's be frank, it is of paramount importance that we make our computer as safe as we possibly can.

About the Author

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