

Safety on the Internet

There are a number of ways to ensure protection when you use the internet, particularly for shopping.

You should ensure that a site has a secure, encrypted, connection before you enter any account details. Look at the address of the site, and you should see that the URL has changed from http: to https:. A further check is a 'padlock' icon, which usually appears to the right of the address bar.  If you click on this icon, you can see the security certificate, and the address should match that of the site you are on.

If you are concerned about keystroke tracking programmes when ordering online, you can use your mouse instead. Click Start > All Programmes > Accessories > Accessibility (or Ease of Access) > On-Screen Keyboard. You can now click on the numbers and letters instead of typing them. To ensure the keyboard stays in front of your web page, go to the Settings menu and tick Always On Top. Click the minimise button to store on your task bar until you are ready to use it again.

When you are completing an on-line form, it is quicker to use the tab key to move through the boxes; this also works using the on-screen keyboard.

Several shopping sites now like to store your credit card details, to make it easier for you to shop next time. Look out for the box where you can click to take off this option. If you pay with a credit card, you are covered under the Consumer Credit Act for your loss if goods valued between £100 and £30,000 don't show up or are faulty. This is not the case if you use a debit card, or a pre-paid Visa or Master Card. You do retain the right to cancel an order within a seven-day cooling off period.

Using middleman services such as PayPal (www.paypal.com) or Moneybookers (www.moneybookers.com) ensures a retailer never sees your personal details. These services are free; however you lose the security of the Consumer Credit Act.

Although it may be easier to use one password for all sites, this is bad practice. If you bank on line, you should certainly have a separate password for this. Passwords should be difficult to guess, and be a combination of letters and numbers. If you do use the same password for all sites, you should consider changing them regularly - as frequently as you can manage.

Get Safe Online (www.getsafeonline.org), the government-backed consumer website, is worth visiting for further advice, and there is an interesting little quiz to test how safety-aware you are.

Submitted by IT for the Terrified :

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We run a range of courses including basic computer use, internet and e-mail, e-Bay, digital photography, genealogy. We also offer individual training, either one-off sessions or a series, at a pace to suit you; each session lasts two hours and costs £6. See our web site or contact us for further details.