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FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR KIDS



PROTECT YOURSELF ONLINE

**Keep your personal information safe.
Here's how to keep it from falling
into the wrong hands.**

STAY SAFE ONLINE

Identity thieves steal people's personal information and use it for their own gain. Don't be a victim.

If you were born in the United States, your digital identity was created the moment you came into the world. The date, time, and place of your birth went into government records. You were assigned a nine-digit Social Security number that sets you apart from everyone else in the country.

When you get older, you'll need this **data** to apply for jobs, file taxes, and buy a home. But beware! Identity thieves can steal your information. They can use it to get credit cards, loans, and jobs in your name. It doesn't matter that you're a kid. Your data is still valuable.

Stealing someone's personal information is illegal. Still, it happens all the time and it's a big hassle to fix. Your best defense is a good offense: Protect your information before thieves can get it. Here's how.

WATCH WHAT YOU SHARE ONLINE

If you have a social-media account, change your settings to *private*. Before each post, do a quick security check. Think: Does this post give away private information, like my address, birthday, school, email, or hometown? Avoid head shots of yourself looking directly into the camera. They make it easier for data thieves to use facial-recognition software to gather more information about you. Instead, opt for action photos. It's a great excuse to show off your cartwheeling, surfing, or skateboarding skills.

THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

Think twice before you click on an online advertisement, pop-up, or suspicious-looking email. Take it from Frank Abagnale, an expert on protecting personal data. He says that about 99% of malware comes from clicking the wrong thing online. Malware can secretly be installed on a computer to steal information or activate a virus. See a suspicious link? Close the page or ask an adult to take a look. Don't open emails from someone you don't know. Here's a test: A message appears to be from someone you know but the subject line looks suspicious. Should you open it? The right answer is to first call or text the sender to see if he or she sent the message. **Hackers** can create scam emails that appear to be from someone you know.

KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR CREDIT

Your personal data is used to build your credit report. Think of it as a report card of your trustworthiness. It lets banks and businesses know if you can be trusted to pay back borrowed money. Good credit is key to qualifying for a home loan or car loan. You'll also need a good report to get credit cards, some jobs, and even insurance. But "hackers use young people's names, addresses, and Social Security numbers to open financial accounts," warns security expert Jerry Irvine. To protect yourself, ask a parent or guardian to check your credit report at least once a year. (It's a good sign if there isn't one already out there for you.) Get it for free at AnnualCreditReport.com. —By Hayden Field

COVER: ANTONIOKHR—GETTY IMAGES (BLUE SHIELD); ISTOCK—GETTY IMAGES PLUS (LOCK); ILLUSTRATION BY DREW WILLIS



GET THE PICTURE?


An identity thief can learn a lot about you from a simple photo. Take a look.

Be careful not to give your full name on social media. The information can be valuable to identity thieves.


Don't let thieves of any kind know when you're out of town. Wait until you've returned home to share vacation photos.

Set your social-media profiles to *private* instead of *public*. This limits who can access your information.

Avoid sharing your exact birth date and hometown online.

Family Challenge 

CREATE THREE RULES for smart online behavior that everyone in your family can agree to follow.

 **Power Words**

data *noun*: facts, statistics, or items of information

hacker *noun*: a person who breaks into a computer or an online network, usually with bad intentions

FILIPPO BACCI—GETTY IMAGES PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DREW WILLIS BACKGROUND: ANTONIOKHR—GETTY IMAGES

KIDS WEIGH IN

Are 13-year-olds responsible enough to manage social media?

Managing social media safely is tricky, even for adults. Yet 13-year-olds can open Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. Many people warn against young people using social media. They argue that identity protection is too much responsibility for a 13-year-old to handle. Others say that teens are mature enough to learn how to avoid online dangers. Here, two TFK Kid Reporters share their views.



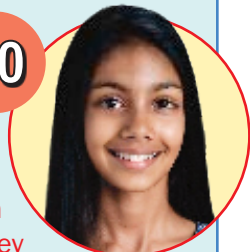
PEOPLEIMAGES/GETTY IMAGES



YES **Aanand Mehta, 12**
Phoenix, Arizona

Social media has become a necessity. It gives young people a sense of belonging. Rather than cut them off from that community, we should teach them to navigate it safely. We teach kids younger than 13 how to tell right from wrong and to be wary of strangers. Just as we teach kids how to be safe in the world, we need to teach them how to be safe online. Then teens need to be trusted to put the lessons into practice.

NO **Simar Khanuja, 12**
Issaquah, Washington



Thirteen-year-olds do not have the maturity and life experience to safely manage their own social-media accounts. They haven't lived long enough to understand how a bad choice can snowball into bigger trouble. You can post a photo that reveals information that helps thieves steal your identity. Sharing too much information can lead to bad consequences. A young person might not realize all the risks.



ASK JEAN:

What is the difference between a debit card and a credit card?
—Andrew Sheffield, 8
Austin, Texas

Debit cards and credit cards look similar. Both are pieces of plastic bearing the logo of the bank or credit union that issued them. Both also contain an embedded microchip that allows the card to be read by checkout terminals in stores, restaurants, and other places. The difference is in the money you're spending when you use the card.

A debit card is linked to your bank account. When you buy something using a debit card, you're spending your own money, which is deducted from your account.

When you buy something with a credit card, you're using borrowed

money—called credit—granted to you by the issuer of the card. At the end of the month, you'll receive a bill. Then you have a choice. If you pay back the full balance on the card, you will pay no interest and the cycle will start over.

But if you pay back only part of what you borrowed, you will be charged interest on the rest. You'll owe interest until you pay the entire balance. If you charge \$300 on a credit card with a 15% interest rate and don't pay it back for a year, it will cost you \$345. The bottom line: It's best to use credit cards for purchases you can pay off quickly.

Do you have a question? Write to Jean at tfkasks4you@timeforkids.com.

COURTESY JEAN CHATZKY