

Are You #CyberAware?

Three Simple Tips For Protecting Your Digital Life And Getting Cyber Secure

(NAPSA)—National Cyber Security Awareness Month—held annually in October—is the ideal time for every family to **STOP. THINK. CONNECT™**. That’s the mantra for this year’s annual campaign designed to remind you about cyber security and encourage vigilance when it comes to the way we act and share our lives online. Computer security company Sophos shares these simple tips for getting protected now and staying secure when online holiday shopping “clicks in.”

1. GOOD PASSWORDS are the simplest and first line of defense against cybercriminals.

Steer clear of using one password for multiple sites or words that can be easily guessed from your online persona. Thanks to Facebook and Twitter, criminals have access to your favorite colors, quotations, movie scripts, pet names and other personal preferences mentioned in social media.

To create a secure password, use a long string of upper- and lowercase letters, numbers and punctuation, and apply a distinct password for each social media or online shopping account. The Sophos “How to Pick a Proper Password” video online provides fun, easy tips for doing this. You may have many to remember, so to help keep passwords organized, consider using a password manager.

2. BE #CYBERAWARE and make sure that anyone using a computer in your family is aware of the latest scams and tricks the cybercrooks might try.

Beware of official-looking but unexpected emails claiming to be from big retailers, shipping companies or even local government agencies that ask you to click on links or open attachments. Cybercriminals go “phishing” with crafty emails that contain links to faked (but near-impossible-to-spot) websites designed to capture your login or credit card information. Worse, those fake emails could contain malware and even ransomware, a particularly nasty type of computer threat that locks your precious files and photos until you pay the “ransom” to the “data-nappers.”

ROLL OUT THE PASSWORD RED CARPET

Your password is your first line of defense against hackers. So make sure it gets the attention it deserves.

GOOD PASSWORDS

- Are at least 14 characters long
- Are a phrase not a single word e.g. "I l@ve my P@ssw@rd!"
- Contain both upper and lower case characters and punctuation
- Are not single words in any language, slang or dialect
- Are not based on personal information, names of family, etc.

BAD PASSWORDS

- Contain less than 10 characters
- Can be found in a dictionary (in any language)
- Are predictable names of family, pets, friends, birthdays, etc.
- Use word or number patterns (say no to Fibonacci)

Get free antivirus protection for your home PCs and Macs. sophos.com/home

Be smart about cyber security.

Security software that includes both antivirus and URL-blocking capabilities can help prevent ransomware. When in doubt, don’t click on links or attachments in unexpected or suspicious emails. Instead, type the public Web address manually into your browser to verify your account status or the notification without touching that email.

3. GET PROTECTED. Ask the top techie in your household to set up security for every computer in your family network. These days, you don’t need to pay a subscription or any dollar amount to get strong, hassle-free protection. Sophos Home is a free antivirus and URL-blocking product for up to 10 PCs and/or Macs at home that can keep you safe from malicious cyber attackers and can filter out content inappropriate for younger users. It’s simple to download and set up within minutes, and even lets you manage security protection for family and friends across the sofa, across the state or across the country.

Finally, remember that we are entering the season for giving. Share these tips with family and friends to help make sure they properly protect their digital data and have a safe, successful, cyber-crime-free shopping season. Go to Sophos for more tips to help families stay safe online.