

Holiday Shopping Guide

Heeding Basic Online Security Tips Can Make the Holidays Brighter

(NAPSA)—The holiday season can bring to mind hours of searching for a decent parking spot and traffic so heavy it can unravel the calmest driver. But traffic on the Internet—at least to the 51 million U.S. consumers who purchased gifts online during the 2000 holiday season, according to a study conducted by The Boston Consulting Group and Harris Interactive—is easier on the nerves.

Although the influx of online shoppers this year is expected to increase 39 percent, as noted by the same study, some consumers still harbor concerns about making purchases on the Web. Chief among these concerns for online shopping are privacy and security issues, according to a report by NOA Interactive, particularly related to personal information and the safety of credit card numbers.

“Consumers are looking for ways to make shopping during the holiday season easier, as well as more convenient, but some still remain unsure about how to shop safely online,” says Paul Roth, president and chief executive officer of Prodigy Communications Corporation, one of the nation’s leading Internet service providers. “As a company that serves the largest amount of DSL Internet users, we want to provide online shoppers with some smart tips on how to protect themselves when seeking out the best buys for their families and friends.”

Roth suggests parents take advantage of the convenience of online shopping this year in order to save time and potentially save money. To ensure a safe and happy shopping experience, take to heart the following carol:



Keeping personal information secure is an important part of shopping online safely.

'Twas a night of online shopping and all about town, / Computers were booting, there are gifts to be found. / All the parents are searching, and looking online / In hopes of buying children the perfect holiday find.

*** Be aware.** Review privacy statements and other security information on a site to determine whether submitted information will be protected.

Before making a purchase and clicking “submit,” / Prodigy has a few tips to ensure the transaction’s a hit. / Keep security in mind, shop with sites that you know, / Get advice from friends and Better Business Bureau.

*** Know your rights.** Determine the amount of personal information you wish to provide on a site. Oftentimes, a company may ask for personal information to fulfill customer service purposes. Find out how much control you have over the information you provide.

When sites ask, “accept cookies?,” not the chocolate-chip kind, / Research privacy statements so you

know when to decline. / When asked for a password, give your mind instant peace; / Mix words and numbers, like “my-2-front-teeth.”

*** Don’t forget.** Write down your unique password, and keep it in a handy and secure place for future reference.

Secure credit card numbers by perusing the site; / Look for “https:” and a padlock—lower right. / With some browsers you might see an unbroken key. / That means it’s secure—resume your shopping spree.

*** Shop around.** If you still feel uneasy about purchasing from a site, visit one that is better established and has well-posted security policies.

By following these tips, online shopping’s a breeze; / The children will be happy, parents will feel at ease. / Now get those gifts wrapped, keep them out of sight; / Happy holidays to all, log off and good night.

“The holidays should be spent with loved ones, not running errands or worrying about the safety of online purchases,” said Roth. “If consumers feel uneasy about a site, they should move on to one that is more established and has highly visible privacy and security policies.”

Consumers can shop safely this holiday season through Prodigy Shopping, which offers a tailored network of nearly 100 online retailers, including The Sharper Image, Harry & David, gap.com and more. Prodigy’s Member Guarantee helps protect Prodigy members from credit card fraud that might result from their shopping online at any store with Prodigy Shopping.