



# YOUR \$

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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 on day 1. The date and place of your birth went into government records. You were assigned a Social Security number. Those nine digits set you apart from everyone else in the country.

When you get older, you'll need this **data** to apply for jobs and to buy a home. But beware! Identity thieves can steal your information. They use it to get credit cards, loans, and jobs in your name.

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

## WATCH WHAT YOU SHARE ONLINE

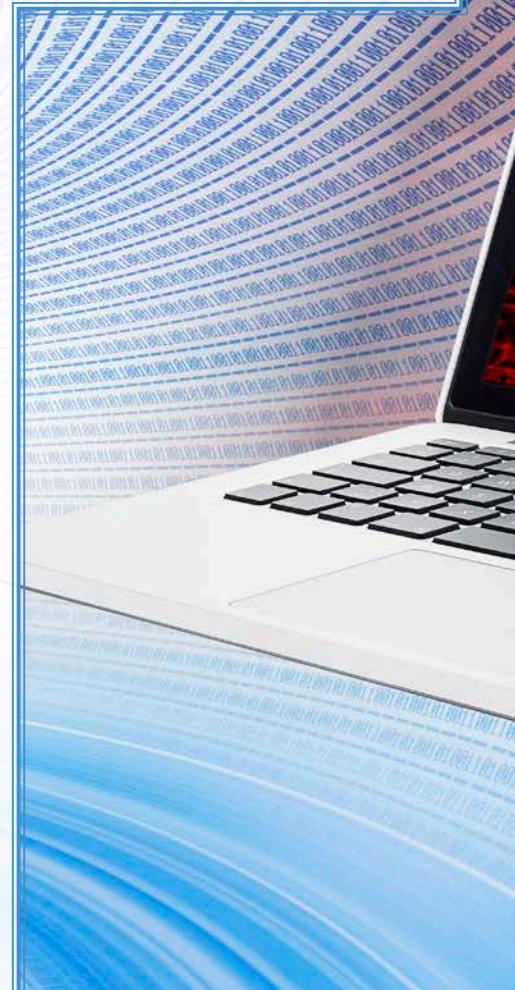
If you have a social-media account, change your settings to *private*. Do a quick security check before each post. Think: Does this post give away private information, like my address, birthday, or email? Avoid head shots of yourself looking directly into the camera. Data thieves can use facial-recognition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

## THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

Don't click on pop-ups, online ads, or suspicious-looking emails. 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. Be careful even if you recognize the sender. **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. Good credit is key to getting home or car loans, credit cards, and even some jobs. Security expert Jerry Irvine warns that "hackers use young people's names, addresses, and Social Security numbers to open financial accounts." 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 already one out there for you.) Check it for free at [AnnualCreditReport.com](http://AnnualCreditReport.com). —By Hayden Field



### 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



## 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.**



FILIPPO BACCI—GETTY IMAGES; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY DREW WILLIS; BACKGROUND: ANTONIO KHAR—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. Don't cut them off from that community. Teach them to navigate it safely. We teach kids younger than 13 not to talk to strangers and how to tell right from wrong. 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.



**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 issued by a bank or credit union. Both also contain an embedded microchip. The chip 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 taken out of your account.

When you buy something with a credit card, you're using borrowed money, called credit. That credit is

given to you by the card issuer. At the end of the month, you'll receive a bill. Then you have a choice. If you pay back all the money you owe, you will pay no interest. The billing cycle starts over from zero.

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. Let's say you charge \$300 on a credit card with a 15% interest rate. If you take a year to pay the full amount, it will cost you \$345.

The bottom line: It's best to use credit cards for purchases you can pay off quickly.

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



Thirteen-year-olds do not have the 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. A photo you post might seem harmless enough. But it could reveal 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.

Do you have a question? Write to Jean at [tfkasks4you@timeforkids.com](mailto:tfkasks4you@timeforkids.com).