

Computer Safety Basics

A friendly guide to staying safe online

FOR SENIORS AGES 65+





CHAPTER 1

Why Computer Safety Matters

Protect Your Money

Keep your bank accounts and financial information secure from criminals.

Guard Your Identity

Prevent thieves from stealing your personal information and using it without permission.

Stay Connected Safely

Enjoy email, video calls, and the internet without worry or fear.

Creating Strong Passwords

Good Password Tips

- Use at least 12 characters
- Mix uppercase and lowercase letters
- Include numbers and symbols
- Make it memorable to you
- Never share with anyone

Password Don'ts

- Don't use your birthday
- Avoid pet names or family names
- Never use "password123"
- Don't reuse the same password

Easy Password Trick

Think of a favorite phrase: "I love my 3 grandchildren!"

Turn it into: **ILoveMy3GrandKids!**

This creates a strong password that's easy to remember.





CHAPTER 3

Antivirus Software Protection

01

Install Trusted Software

Windows: Windows Defender (built-in and free)

Mac: Built-in protection through macOS

You can also try Norton, McAfee, or Bitdefender.

02

Keep It Running

Make sure your antivirus is always turned on. Check that the icon shows a green checkmark or shield.

03

Run Regular Scans

Schedule a weekly scan of your entire computer. Most programs can do this automatically.

04

Update Regularly

Allow your antivirus to update itself. New threats appear daily, so updates are essential.

Software Updates Are Essential



Windows Updates

Click Start > Settings > Update & Security

Click "Check for updates" and install all available updates.

Restart your computer when prompted.



Mac Updates

Click the Apple menu > System Preferences > Software Update

Click "Update Now" if updates are available.

Restart your Mac when prompted.



Why Updates Matter

Software updates fix security holes that criminals try to exploit. Think of them as repairing cracks in your home's walls —they keep the bad guys out.

Download

CHAPTER 5

Safe Downloading Practices

Only Download from Trusted Sources

Stick to official websites and app stores. For Windows, use the Microsoft Store. For Mac, use the App Store.

Watch for Warning Signs

Be suspicious of pop-ups offering free software, emails with unexpected attachments, or websites with spelling errors.

Read Before You Click

Before downloading, check reviews and ratings. If something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

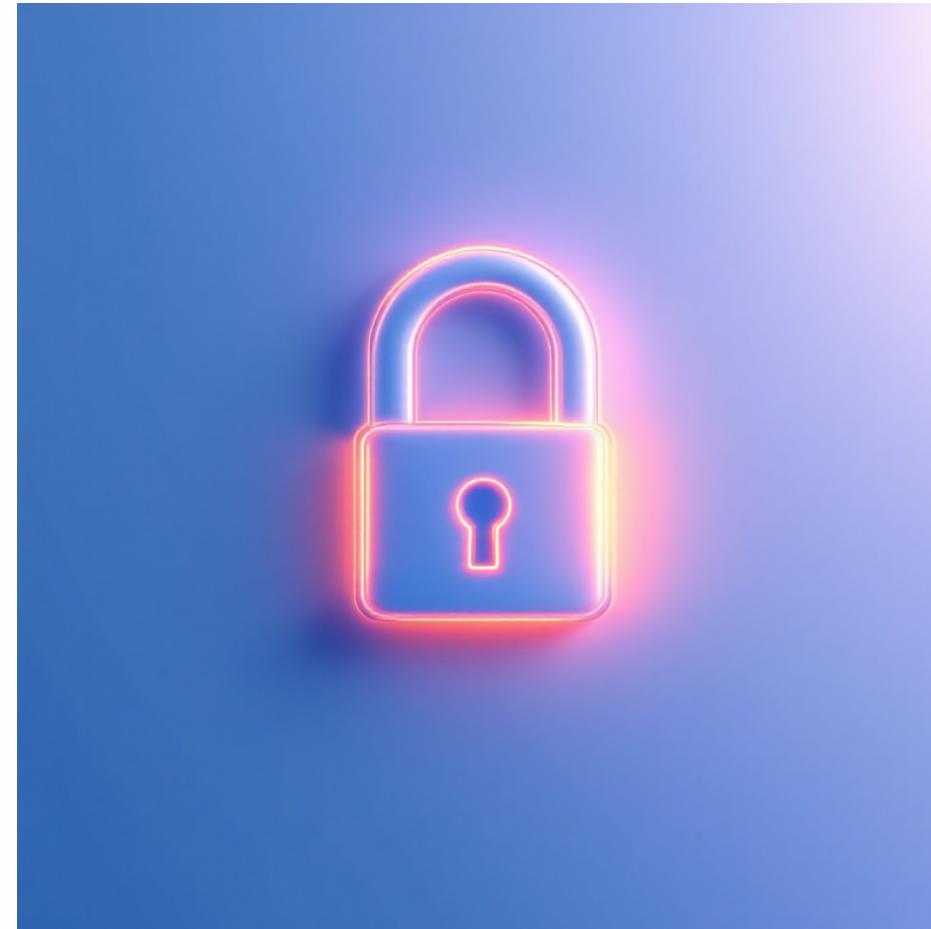
Scan Downloads

After downloading, run your antivirus scan on the file before opening it. This extra step provides important protection.

Browser Safety & Pop-Up Warnings

Safe Browsing Tips

- Look for the padlock icon in the address bar
- Make sure the website starts with "https://"
- Keep your browser updated
- Use Chrome, Firefox, Safari, or Edge
- Enable pop-up blockers



Warning: Fake Pop-Ups

"Your computer is infected! Call this number now!" This is a scam. Never call numbers from pop-ups.

What to Do Instead

Close the browser completely. Press **Ctrl+Alt+Delete** (Windows) or **Command+Q** (Mac). Don't click anything in the pop-up.

Backing Up Your Files



Your Computer

All your important photos, documents, and files stored on your computer.



Backup Copy

A duplicate copy saved to an external hard drive or cloud service.



Protected

If something goes wrong, your precious memories and documents are safe.



Windows Backup

Use "File History" built into Windows.

Connect an external hard drive, then go to
Settings > Update & Security > Backup.

Mac Backup

Use "Time Machine" built into macOS.

Connect an external hard drive, then go to
System Preferences > Time Machine.



Public WiFi Safety

1

Avoid Sensitive Activities

Don't check your bank account or shop online when using public WiFi at cafes, libraries, or airports.

2

Verify the Network Name

Ask staff for the correct WiFi network name. Criminals create fake networks with similar names to steal information.

3

Use Your Phone's Hotspot

When possible, use your smartphone's mobile hotspot instead of public WiFi. It's much more secure.

4

Turn Off Sharing

Disable file sharing and AirDrop when on public networks. This prevents others from accessing your device.

Getting Help When You Need It

Ask Family Members

Reach out to children, grandchildren, or other relatives who are comfortable with technology. Don't be shy about asking questions.

Visit Your Local Library

Many libraries offer free computer classes and one-on-one help sessions specifically designed for seniors.

Call Official Support

Contact Microsoft, Apple, or your internet provider directly. Use phone numbers from their official websites, never from pop-ups.

Senior Centers & CSNP

Check local senior centers for technology programs. Visit csnp.org for free resources and educational materials.

-  **Important:** Never give remote access to your computer to someone who calls you unexpectedly. Legitimate tech support will never call you out of the blue.

Your Computer Safety Checklist

Weekly Tasks

- Run antivirus scan
- Check for software updates
- Review recent account activity
- Back up important files

Monthly Tasks

- Change important passwords
- Clear browser history and cache
- Review installed programs
- Check backup system is working

Always Remember

- Never share passwords
- Don't click suspicious links
- Verify before downloading
- Log out after using websites
- Be skeptical of urgent requests
- Trust your instincts

Print this checklist and keep it near your computer as a helpful reminder!

Cybersecurity Non-Profit (CSNP)

Making cybersecurity knowledge accessible to everyone through education, community, and practical resources.

- **Our Programs**

Business & Non-Profit Security • Family Cybersecurity • Kids Safety • Senior Digital Safety • Women's Security • Parents & Educators

- **Everything We Offer Is Free**

We believe everyone deserves access to cybersecurity education, regardless of their background or budget.

[Visit cspn.org](https://cspn.org)[Free Resources](#)

Stay safe online. You've got this!

