

## Protecting your personal PC, laptop, smart phone or wireless gadget is as crucial as locking the house when you leave in the morning.



Looking after the security of your devices extends beyond insuring them for theft or fault. In fact, phone bills, banking details, and personal emails saved on your electronic gizmos could cost you more than actually having to replace a lost laptop or mobile phone that's fallen into the wrong hands.

At the end of the day, an unprotected computer will undermine all of the other precautions you might take to stay safe online. So, go ahead - run through the following advice and pick up some tips to keep your family's PC and devices safe and sound.

### Get immunised – virus protection is key

Remember - just one virus on a computer is one too many! Your firewall acts like the maître d' at a fancy restaurant - if you're not on the list, you can't get in.

- Install anti-virus software and ensure the built-in firewall is switched on.
- Regularly download and install the latest security patches for your computer software and web browser, using automatic updates where possible.
- Watch what you download - sometimes malware may be masquerading as e-security software designed to protect you.
- Delete emails immediately if you don't know the sender.

### 'Password123' is not a secure password!

Just as a house or car key is difficult to copy, it's important to pick a password that's difficult to guess.

- Make sure passwords are at least eight characters long and contain deliberate misspellings and numbers.
- Choose a password that requires both hands to type, with letters from separate sections of the keyboard.
- Pick a handful of passwords to use so if your security is compromised, potential damage is limited to the accounts that share that password.
- If you must write your password down, don't keep it anywhere near your computer.

### Who's the boss?

It's likely your personal details (address and phone number) are the same as your kids, so it's important to encourage your entire family to be safe and savvy with PC protection.

- Talk to your family about not disclosing personal information on the web, and read the privacy settings of sites before handing over your details.
- Create special limited user accounts for the kids on your home computer (without Administrator status) for browsing the web, chat, and gaming.
- Back up important files and photos on a password protected hard drive stored in a different location to your computer.
- Encourage your kids to let you know if they see any suspicious emails. You don't have to be a super nerd to keep safe, you just have to be aware of the possible risks.

### Let's get physical

Once you've taken steps to protect your gizmos, it's important you remain security savvy when out and about.

- Avoid public wireless hotspots and secure your own wireless network to prevent unauthorised access.
- Pin lock mobile phones, remembering to wipe the contents before putting it in for repairs.
- Consider if you really need all the files that you carry around on your laptop and keep a record of any sensitive data that is stored on it.
- Carry your gadgets and laptop as inconspicuously as possible.

