How to Keep Your Computer and Information Safe

KS3 Ages 11-14 ⏰ 3 min read

Why Does Online Safety Matter?

Every time you use a computer, tablet, or phone, you're sharing information with the internet. Your name, address, passwords, and even what you like to buy are all valuable data. **Hackers** are people who try to steal this information to use for bad purposes. Learning how to protect yourself is like locking your front door — it keeps the bad guys out.

Think of it like a diary with a lock. You wouldn't leave your diary open on a park bench for anyone to read. Your computer is the same — you need to protect it.

Use Strong Passwords

A **password** is like a key to your digital home. The stronger your key, the harder it is for someone to break in. A strong password has at least **12 characters** and uses a mix of **uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols** (like ! or @). Avoid using your name, birthday, or common words — these are the first things hackers try.

Never use the same password for multiple accounts. If a hacker cracks one password, they can access everything. Consider using a **password manager** — a tool that safely stores all your passwords so you only need to remember one strong one.

Keep Your Software Updated

Software updates are like patches that fix holes in your computer's armor. **Hackers** find weaknesses in old software and exploit them. When your device asks you to update, don't ignore it — say yes! This includes your operating system, web browser, and apps.

Think of it like fixing a hole in your roof. If you don't patch it, water will leak in. Software updates stop hackers from leaking in.

Be Careful What You Click

Phishing is when hackers send fake emails or messages pretending to be from trusted companies. They trick you into clicking links or downloading files that contain **viruses** or **malware**. Check the sender's email address carefully. If something feels suspicious, ask a parent before clicking.

Use Antivirus Protection

Antivirus software is like a security guard for your computer. It watches for suspicious files and blocks them before they can cause damage. Make sure your device has antivirus software running at all times.

Protect Your Personal Information

Don't share personal details online unless absolutely necessary. Never post your full address, phone number, or school name on social media. Be cautious about what information you share with websites — read their **privacy policy** to understand how they'll use your data.

By following these steps, you'll make your digital life much safer and more secure.

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