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# Why You Should Guard Your Personal Information Online

**KS3** Ages 11-14 🕒 3 min read

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## What is Personal Information?

**Personal information** is anything that identifies you as an individual. This includes your full name, **date of birth**, home address, phone number, email address, school name, and passwords. It even includes photos of you and details about your family members or friends.

## Why Should You Be Careful?

The internet is amazing, but not everyone online has good intentions. Criminals and dishonest people can use your personal information in harmful ways. They might use your details to steal money, pretend to be you, or contact you directly to trick you.

Think of it like leaving your front door wide open with a sign showing where you keep your pocket money. Strangers passing by could easily come in and take things.

## Common Risks You Should Know About

**Identity theft** happens when someone uses your name and details to impersonate you online or in real life. They might open fake accounts, make purchases using your information, or damage your reputation.

**Cyberbullying** is when people use personal information to harass or embarrass you online. Once something is posted, it can be copied and shared forever—even if you delete it.

**Phishing scams** involve criminals pretending to be trustworthy people or companies to trick you into sharing passwords or bank details. They might send fake emails or messages that look real.

Think of it like a con artist at a fair who pretends to be a ticket seller to get your pocket money.

## How to Protect Yourself

Never share your **real name**, address, school, or phone number on social media or public websites. Use **strong passwords** (mix of letters, numbers, and symbols) and never share them with anyone except your parents. Check the **privacy settings** on apps and social media to limit who can see your information.

Always ask a parent or trusted adult before giving any information online. If someone asks you personal questions, tell an adult immediately—even if they seem friendly.

Remember: the internet is brilliant for learning and connecting with friends, but your safety comes first. Being **careful and cautious** now protects your future.