

## How's Your Digital Privacy?

You may have noticed ads popping up on your Facebook page for products or services you just happened to search for, like bathroom remodeling or face creams. This is the tip of a very deep iceberg when it comes to data privacy.

## Protect Your Data Privacy

To protect your data, first do the obvious simple things.

- When your phone or computer prompts you to download the latest security update, **download it**, don't put it off, especially for Windows. [Here's](#) why it's so important.
- [Update your passwords](#) like everyone keeps telling you to do.
- And [be wary of scammers](#). They are getting more and more sophisticated these days.

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Your goal is to prevent any important data from being hacked. Unwanted ads for products are an inconvenience. Getting credit card, social security or bank data stolen is a disaster. Here are a few simple, relatively easy ways, to protect yourself.

## More ways to protect your data

- Use [virus protection](#) on your Android phone as well as your computer. Mac computers are less vulnerable to viruses and malware, but that's becoming less true as hackers get ever more sophisticated; here is [the lowdown](#) on virus protection for Macs. PC's are still vulnerable even though Windows has stepped up virus protection. Here's is a [great guide](#) to the best virus software for PCs. If you already have Malwarebytes for malware you're home free, it now offers a [complete virus prevention](#).

### Even your flashlight app could be selling your data.

- **Enable [two-step verification](#)** for all sites that have any important data, like banks, credit cards, investment accounts, etc. As this [article](#) explains, two-step verification involves using your email or cell phone to receive a code which you can put into the site to verify your identity.
- **Beware of hackers;** they use all kinds of tricks to get your data. Common scams: **Popups** that warn you to click on them to solve some security or other computer problem. **NEVER** click on a popup you don't recognize. Emails that **seem** to be from a familiar company, like your bank, and want you to provide your social security number, bank account number or other private info. **Always check email return addresses** for the https:// which is the security certificate, and then the name of the company that you recognize, plus .com.
- **Browse in [incognito mode](#).** It's a simple way to [open another window](#) and prevent websites from placing [cookies](#) on your browser and targeting you with more ads.
- **Get rid of non-vital apps on your phone.** You can access just about every site from a browser. Apps sell all kinds of data. Even your flashlight app could be selling your data. Here's a [list of Android apps](#) to avoid.

## But don't let it stop you!

Many seniors are so paranoid about being hacked or tracked that they refuse to shop online or stay off the internet completely. This is unwise. There are simply too many facets of modern life conducted on the internet today. The convenience is totally worth it. It IS possible to protect yourself, but you do have to pay attention, and get used to the reality that—unlike in real life—where the default is to trust strangers, on the internet it's the opposite.

“I don’t have email. Or Internet.”

When an acquaintance told me this, I had to print out a hard copy of a document and hand-deliver it to her. What an unnecessary headache...but an understandable one.

## **I can relate**

Fifteen years ago, for professional reasons, I absolutely had to learn how to send and receive email. However, I suffered from “digiphobia” – digital fear and anxiety – just like my acquaintance. I was a digital exile.

It took my geeky friend, Jay, to help me realize I had made matters far more complicated *in my mind* than they are *in reality*.

Take email – it took Jay less than 20 minutes to teach me to open an email account and learn to access, read, write, and send email. Ditto the Internet. I needed a little help but in less than an hour Jay had me surfing the Internet. If I didn’t know how to do something, Jay taught me to “Click around – your computer won’t explode.” I figured things out on my own by clicking around.

After Jay moved out of state, I learned about Senior Planet and its resources and information. I learned how to use an iPad, use social media platforms, and building a website, taught by knowledgeable, competent, and patient instructors. Even after Covid when classes moved to the internet, Senior Planet’s Zoom instruction got me back in class – in front of a screen. Digiphobia: Cured.

Of course, many people aren’t necessarily afraid of connectivity – they just can’t afford it.

Here’s how you can help the digital exiles you know.

## **Help for the Digital Exiles near you**

Know someone you’d like to send email to, or chat by Zoom, but who can’t or won’t take the first step? Here’s what they might say – and what you can tell them:

### **“It’s all too complicated”**

Caregivers and friends can take a [look here](#) at ***Aging Connected***, an initiative of OATS and a gathering place for information if you are or care for one of the millions of older adults without access to high-speed internet. You can visit it to find low-cost internet options that are available in your area. The ***Stuck at Home Guide*** on Senior Planet also provides information about connecting to affordable broadband internet service options.

## “Connectivity and devices are too expensive”

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) offers The Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB); you can [learn more here](#). (You can also call 877-745-1930). It provides a discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands.

In addition, there’s a one-time discount to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers (some conditions apply). More details are on the Aging Connected website: <https://agingconnected.org/EBB/>

## “There’s no connectivity where I live”

While rural areas sometimes lack WiFi coverage, there are ways to get around that limitation:

- <https://seniorplanet.org/amp-your-internet/>
- <https://seniorplanet.org/stuck-at-home-guide-get-online/>
- <https://themescene.tv/guide/how-to-get-wifi-in-remote-areas/>

## “I need more help”

The digital exile in your life has several options;

**Call** the National Senior Planet Tech Hotline at 888-713-3495 (9am-5pm EST, M-F)

**Look** for a local option for in-person help. Recently Senior Planet launched a licensing program to deliver in-person learning programs for older adults living in low-density areas. The program is open to public, private and 502(c)3 organizations that serve older adults. [Learn more here](#).

Know a library near you that might be interested? Ask them to email [licensing@seniorplanet.org](mailto:licensing@seniorplanet.org) to attend an information session or for questions.

**Visit** a local library for free computer time (and sometimes, instruction). Or try the library’s computer and connectivity to access [Senior Planet](#) programs and tutorials.

## Why connect to Wi-Fi on your computer devices?

To answer this question, think about what you could do with the internet if you could access it from any location, even while moving around. Access to all kinds of information and staying connected with other people, especially your loved ones, is probably the top two reasons for using Wi-Fi on your computer devices.

The world is more connected than ever before. Benefiting from this connection starts by knowing how to check available Wi-Fi and connect to it.

The picture below displays the standard icons used to represent Wi-Fi from one device to another.



## How to check for Wi-Fi and connect to it

On smartphones and tablets, the steps to follow are very similar:

- Open the Settings app, then select Wireless & Bluetooth, then select Wi-Fi. You should see a list of networks. If you do not see any list, you should turn on the switch for Wi-Fi at the top.
- Select the Wi-Fi network that you would like to connect to.
- If prompted, enter the password to access the network.

## Public Wi-Fi disclosure

If public Wi-Fi does not require a password or an account for access, it is **unsecured**. Unsecured networks are still helpful, to some extent. However, limit your activities to ones like browsing the internet, communicating with people, taking courses online, streaming movies and music, and reading the news.

## Use Extra Care on Public Wi-Fi

Here are a few things to keep in mind while using public networks:

- **Refrain** from accessing sensitive information such as bank accounts on an unsecured network.
- **Do not shop** online on public Wi-Fi.
- **Do not leave** your devices unattended in a public place.

## Articles

(first two pages full article) <https://seniorplanet.org/keep-your-digital-privacy/>

(second two pages full article) <https://seniorplanet.org/digital-exile/>

## Additional Resources

Online safety course: <https://connections.oasisnet.org/oasis-connections-guide-to-online-safety/>

<https://aginginplace.org/how-to-become-tech-savvy-for-seniors-in-10-days/>