Keeping safe online – the essentials

Using a computer to access the internet can sometimes feel daunting. If you have not used the internet before or don't feel confident it can be intimidating, but don't worry.

Using the internet can make our lives a lot easier – sending an email to a loved one or being able to shop online for example. The internet is full of possibilities to learn, engage and connect with people, however it is also the perfect place to take advantage of vulnerable people.

Getting 'online' is a great idea but it's also a good idea to know how to keep yourself safe.

Follow these tips to help you think about being safe online.

1 If you are not confident go online with a family member, friend or carer who can support you. Gain confidence looking at websites and navigating around your computer.

2 Be aware of online scams (criminals using the internet to try to con people into giving them money or personal information). If something or someone seems too good to be true, it usually is so stay clear!

3 Be careful what information you give out online

4 Use a secure website if you are shopping or banking online (secure websites begin with 'https' in the address bar and will have a Padlock symbol)

5 Make sure the computer you use has up to date security software on it. "Anti – virus" software will look to remove viruses before they infect your computer.

6 Use a strong password – use 8 characters or more. Use a combination of upper-case letters, numbers and symbols (e.g. @, £, %< *).

Social media

Social media is increasingly used by older people and when used safely can help combat loneliness, create connections and stay in touch with friends and family. Chat rooms, dating websites, and social networking sites (such as Facebook and Twitter) can help you stay connected. Remember to use the privacy features to choose who can see your profile and what you post. Also think about what you post and avoid posting personal information (such as date of birth and addresses).

Checklist ✓ ✗

Follow our simple Do and Don't checklist

Do

- *Trust your instincts – if it doesn't seem right it probably isn't*

- *Ask for help or support when using the internet if you are not confident*

- *Use a strong password made up of upper case, numbers and symbols.*

- *Check that the computer you are using has up to date anti – virus software*

- *Ensure that websites are secure (check for "https" in the address bar as well as a padlock symbol)*

- *Check spelling of a webpage, if it doesn't look right it probably isn't*

Don't

- *Give out personal information to those you don't know*

- *Send money to someone you've met online*

- *Open junk or spam emails*

- *Share your passwords with other people*

- *Send pictures of yourself without knowing who you're sending to*

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