

Safety Tips For Using Computers & Cell Phones

Computers and cell phones are useful to gather information and stay in touch with family and friends. But cell phones and computers can also be used to harass you, follow you, and abuse you. Reading the following safety tips will help you use your computer and/or cell phone more safely.

Nothing can make your computer and cell phone totally safe. In some cases, it may be best to stop using any social media, like



[myspace](#)



Twitter



Flickr shutterfly



Picasa.



Instagram

and to limit the use of your cell phone. It is especially important to think about these things if you are involved in a civil or criminal case.

Use a Safer Phone or Computer

If someone who harmed you had access to your computer or cell phone, it may not be safe to use. There are programs available called Spyware. Spyware can be downloaded onto your computer or cell phone in just a few minutes. Spyware allows the person to track everything you are doing on your cell phone or computer.

TIP: If you think your phone or computer has spyware, keep using it for simple things that other people already know about you. But for searches or emails that involve your safety or situation, use a safer phone or computer. Ask an advocate about where to find a safer phone or computer.

TIP: Make your password and security questions harder to guess: replace characters for letters (@ for a / \$ for s). Use a mix of numbers and letters.

Change Passwords and Security Questions

It is easy to use names or dates that are easy for you to remember for passwords and security questions. But the person who harmed you may also know those names or dates. If so, this person could get into your bank, credit card and social media accounts.

Set and Check Privacy Settings

Are you friends on Facebook or another social media site with someone who harmed you? What about your children, friends, and family? If so, that person may have access to your information.

TIP: Set, check, and recheck the privacy settings on your social networking pages to be sure your settings are up to date. Ask an advocate to show you how to do this.

TIP: Ask your friends and family not to post pictures, comments, or other information that may uncover your or your child's information.

Talk to Family and Friends About Your Tech Safety Needs

Talk to your friends and family about the importance of respecting your privacy.

Turn Off GPS on All Electronic Devices

GPS provides information on exactly where you are. GPS is on cell phones, digital cameras, laptop computers and other electronic devices. The person who harmed you can use GPS to track or find you. For instance, when you post a picture on your social media page, GPS allows the site to show where the picture was taken.

TIP: Follow the steps in your user manual to turn off GPS on all your cameras, phones, and other electronic devices. Consider turning off GPS on your child's devices, too.

TIP: Limit the information you give out about yourself or give information that the person who harmed you already knows.

Keep Your Personal Information Private

Every time you sign up for special deals or services, you are asked to give out your personal information, including your name, address, and phone number. If you give your information, it may be sold to a database that the public can access for free.

Keep Careful Records of Electronic Abuse

If you think someone is harassing or following you online, it is important to write it down and keep a close record. But keeping a record can be risky if the person who harmed you finds out.

TIP: Print a copy and/or take a photo of the message or computer screen. Keep the paper copy in a safe place where nobody can find it, like a trusted friend's house or at work.

Speak With an Advocate About Safer Technology Use

TIP: Find a local program near you. Call

**The National Domestic Violence Hotline, 800-799-7233 or
The National Sexual Assault Hotline, 800-656-4673**

You can also visit us online at www.pcadv.org or www.pcar.org.

