

## 5 Safety Tips for Using a Public Computer

Are public computers at libraries, Internet cafes, airports and coffee shops safe to use? That depends on how you use them! Take these tips to help keep your personal or financial information private. These measures provide some protection against hackers who use a public computer after you leave.



- 1 **Don't enter sensitive information into a public computer.** Avoid typing your credit card number or any other financial or otherwise sensitive information into any public computer. Keep in mind that an industrious thief may have installed sophisticated software on the public computer that records every keystroke and then e-mails that information back to the thief. Even if you haven't saved your information and you've erased your tracks, they still have access to your information.
  - 2 **Watch for over-the-shoulder snoops.** When you use a public computer, be on the lookout for thieves who look over your shoulder or watch as you enter passwords.
  - 3 **Don't leave the computer unattended with sensitive information on the screen.** If you have to temporarily leave the public computer, log out of all programs and close all windows that might display sensitive information.
  - 4 **Don't save your logon information.** Always log out of Web sites by clicking "log out" on the site. It's not enough to simply close the browser window or type in another address. Many programs (especially instant messenger programs) include automatic login features that will save your user name and password. Always log off or restart the computer when you are leaving.
- Erase your tracks when you leave.** Web browsers such as Internet Explorer keep a record of your passwords and every page you visit, even after you've closed them and logged out.
- 5 To remove a stored password and other stored information in Internet Explorer 7:
    1. From the **Tools** menu, select **Internet Options**.
    2. On the **General** tab, under **Browsing history**, click **Delete**. You now have several options:
      - **Temporary Internet Files** – Click on the button Delete files (copies of web pages, images, and media that are saved for faster viewing)
      - **Cookies** – Click on the button Delete cookies
      - **History** - Click on the button Delete history
      - **Form Data** - Click on the button Delete forms (Saved information you entered in forms)
      - **Passwords** – Click on the button Delete passwords
    3. Click **Close/OK**.

To remove a stored password or other stored information in Internet Explorer 8 or 9:

1. From the **Tools** menu, select **Internet Options**.
2. On the **General** tab, under "Browsing history", click **Delete**.
3. Check the item(s) you want to delete:
  - **Temporary Internet files**: Copies of web pages, images, and media that are saved for faster viewing
  - **Cookies**
  - **History**: A list of visited sites
  - **Download history** (Internet Explorer 9 only): A list of downloaded files
  - **Form data**: Saved information you entered in forms
  - **Passwords**
  - **ActiveX Filtering and Tracking Protection data** (Internet Explorer 9) or **InPrivate Filtering data** (Internet Explorer 8): Saved data to detect where web sites may be automatically sharing details about your visit

To delete everything, uncheck **Preserve Favorites website data** and check all the other options.

4. Click **Delete**.

If you are accessing a public computer which is using Wi-Fi or a wireless network, check the privacy statement on the network's website to learn about the type of encryption they use (if they don't have a privacy statement, you'd be better off not using the network).

If you want to be safe, avoid typing any sensitive information, such as your credit card number or any other financial information, while you use a public wireless network. If you must enter credit card numbers while using a public wireless network, make sure there is a locked padlock icon at the bottom right corner of the browser window and make sure the web address begins with **https**: (the "s" stands for secure).

If you're not surfing the Internet or sending email, but still using the computer in an area where there is a public wireless network, disable your wireless connection:

- If there is an external Wi-Fi card – remove it.
- If there is an internal Wi-Fi card - right-click the connection and click **Disable**.

#### Works Cited:

Microsoft Online Safety

<http://www.microsoft.com/security/online-privacy/public-pc.aspx>