

# Socializing on the Internet

The internet is a widely known source of information. You can conduct research, network, blog, participate in discussion boards, and chat with people from all across the globe.

Have you ever thought about what information you are sharing about yourself on the Internet?

## Internet Use at Work

Many companies abide by an acceptable use policy for the Internet. Be sure to read your company's policy closely, and use your work time appropriately. Be mindful of activities that are not work-related.

Are you able check your personal email or update your Twitter status while on the job? A recent study done by Vault.com indicates that 25 percent of employees use the internet for personal use at work. Listening to music, streaming videos, chatting, or surfing on social networking sites are not a good use of your time while at work or on company time and equipment.

However, acceptable Internet use at work does exist. You are working on a presentation or sales proposal and to do some research on a specific topic or company. Maybe, you are needing to locate a vendor for a particular product or piece of office equipment. When using the Internet at work, make sure it falls in line with your job duties.

## Sharing Information

From a personal standpoint, what information are you sharing on the Internet that others could access?

Remember, your boss or company may be able to access public information. If you are sharing information that you don't want your boss to see, then leave it off your personal website. This includes message boards, public blogs, and photos. While many sites have privacy controls, it is still a good idea to be careful what information you make public, should it accidentally appear on the wrong computer screen.

## Tips: Use Discretion

Before posting personal information:

1. Keep in mind that you cannot be sure who does and does not have access to your personal information.
2. Information posted to a website or blog may remain there even if you delete it.
3. Schools, employers, and other community organizations may consider any posted information on the Internet when they are making decisions regarding employment, admission, membership, etc. Remember, anything you post is open to the public.
4. Avoid posting personal information such as address, phone number, location, etc.

These tips are not meant to scare you, but rather to help you make safe choices.

## Socializing

When meeting new people on the internet, keep in mind that they may not be who they say they are. If you do decide to meet someone, use caution. Pick a public place, and tell a few other people where you are going and when you plan to be back. Keep your cell phone handy.

## Tips for Keeping Information Safe

- When forwarding email messages, remove your friends and family's email addresses from the email and utilize the BCC field to protect the identity of people you are emailing who don't know each other
- Use strong passwords and don't use the same password for all of your online accounts
- When shopping online, make sure the checkout page is secure. You can tell a page is secure if the URL starts with https://. You should see a lock icon displayed somewhere in the web browser or address field
- Don't open attachments you may receive in an email if you don't know the sender as it may contain a virus that can harm your computer and/or expose your personal information
- Monitor your children's internet use or use a service that allows you to limit your child's online contacts to people that you know
- Be aware of phishing emails deceiving you into thinking they are requesting information for a legitimate company

Or, bring a friend to your meeting place to have them watch from another part of the room. Be safe, and always have an "out" in case you need one.

***If you or someone you know is having a problem, contact your EAP—help is available!***

For further information, please call your EAP:

**1.800.492.4357**

Callers with TTY equipment, please call:  
**1.800.338.2039**

Online Services: [www.mhnetep.com](http://www.mhnetep.com)