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DO A DIGITAL DECLUTTER THIS SPRING

A few easy, actionable tips will help you stay cyber safe and protect your personal data and identity. [The National Cyber Security Alliance](#) (NCSA) and [Better Business Bureau](#) (BBB) are encouraging all consumers freshen up their online lives by conducting a thorough cleaning of their cyber clutter. With preventing identity theft a top safety concern for Americans, NCSA and BBB encourage everyone to make “digital spring cleaning” an annual ritual to help protect valuable personal data.

Refreshing your online life is a relatively simple process. NCSA and BBB have identified the top trouble-free tips everyone should follow this spring and all year round.



KEEP A CLEAN MACHINE

Ensure all software on internet-connected devices – including PCs, smartphones and tablets – is up to date to reduce risk of infection from malware.



LOCK DOWN YOUR LOGIN

Your usernames and passphrase are not enough to protect key accounts like email, banking and social media. Begin your spring cleaning by fortifying your online accounts and enabling the strongest authentication tools available, such as biometrics, security keys or a unique one-time code through an app on your mobile device.



DECLUTTER YOUR MOBILE LIFE

Most of us have apps we no longer use and some that need updating. Delete unused apps and keep others current, including the operating system on your mobile devices.



DO A DIGITAL FILE PURGE

Perform a good, thorough review of your online files. Tend to digital records, PCs, phones and any device with storage just as you do for paper files. Get started by doing the following:

- Clean up your email: Save only those emails you really need and unsubscribe to email you no longer need/want to receive.
- Back it up: Copy important data to a secure cloud site or another computer/drive where it can be safely stored. Passphrase protect backup drives. Always back up your files before getting rid of a device, too.



OWN YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

Review the privacy and security settings on websites you use to ensure they're at your comfort level for sharing. It's OK to limit how and with whom you share information.



Here are some user-friendly tips to help with the safe disposal of electronically stored data. Prep your devices in advance of participating in BBB's Secure Your ID Day.



KNOW WHAT DEVICES TO DIGITALLY “SHRED”

Computers and mobile phones aren't the only devices that capture and store sensitive, personal data. External hard drives and USBs, tape drives, embedded flash memory, wearables, networking equipment and office tools like copiers, printers and fax machines all contain valuable personal information.



CLEAR OUT STOCKPILES

If you have a stash of old hard drives or other devices – even if they're in a locked storage area – information still exists and could be stolen. Don't wait: wipe and/or destroy unneeded hard drives as soon as possible.



EMPTY YOUR TRASH OR RECYCLE BIN ON ALL DEVICES AND BE CERTAIN TO WIPE AND OVERWRITE

Simply deleting and emptying the trash isn't enough to completely get rid of a file. Permanently delete old files using a program that deletes the data, “wipes” it from your device and overwrites it by putting random data in place of your information – that then cannot be retrieved.

- For devices like tape drives, remove any identifying information that may be written on labels before disposal, and use embedded flash memory or networking or office equipment to perform a full factory reset and verify that no potentially sensitive information still exists on the device.



DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH THE DEVICE

Simply deleting and emptying the trash isn't enough to completely get rid of a file. Permanently delete old files using a program that deletes the data, “wipes” it from your device and overwrites it by putting random data in place of your information – that then cannot be retrieved.



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DIGITAL DECLUTTER CHECKLIST

KEEP A CLEAN MACHINE

Make sure that all web-connected devices are squeaky clean.

- ☐ **Update software on all internet-connected devices** to reduce risks from malware and infections.
- ☐ **Clean up your mobile life** by deleting unused apps, keeping others current and reviewing app permissions.

MAKE SURE YOU'RE SECURE

Enhancing the security of your online accounts is a must and a fast, simple way to be safer online.

- ☐ **Lock down your login:** Your usernames and passphrases are not enough to protect key accounts like email, banking and social media. Strengthen online accounts and use strong authentication tools whenever offered.
- ☐ **Secure your router** by making sure it has a strong passphrase and does not broadcast who you are through its name, such as "the Jones Family" or "123 Elm Street."
- ☐ **Make your passphrase a sentence** that is at least 12 characters long. Focus on positive phrases that you like to think about and are easy to remember. On many sites, you can even use spaces.
- ☐ **Make unique passphrases** for important accounts like email, finance and healthcare.
- ☐ **Write down your new passphrases and store them in a safe place away from your computer.**
- ☐ **Check to ensure all devices are password, passcode, fingerprint or eye-scan protected.**

DIGITAL FILE PURGE AND PROTECTION

Be sure to properly dispose of sensitive materials – such as hard drives and memory cards – at a community shredding event. Check bbb.org/secure-your-id-day to see if there is a BBB "Secure Your ID Day" event in your area.

- ☐ **Clean out your old email and empty deleted folders.** If you need to keep old messages, move them to an archive.
- ☐ **Delete or archive older files and outdated financial statements.**
- ☐ **Unsubscribe to newsletters, email alerts and updates you no longer read.**
- ☐ **Update your online photo album** by deleting or backing up old or less flattering photos.
- ☐ **Update online relationships** by reviewing friends on social networks and all contacts lists to make sure everyone still belongs.
- ☐ **Copy important data to a secure cloud site or other drive where it can be safely stored.**
- ☐ **Password protect back-up drives and keep them in a different location off the network.**
- ☐ **Permanently delete all old files.**

CLEAN UP YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION

Make sure your online reputation shines.

- ☐ **Own your online presence** by reviewing the privacy and security settings on websites you use to be sure they are set at your comfort level for sharing.
- ☐ **Clean up your social media presence** by deleting old photos, etc. that are embarrassing or no longer represent who you are.
- ☐ **Update your "online self"** by reviewing your personal information and updating it where needed.