

Seven Things to Stop Doing on Facebook NOW!

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Social networks are a fast and easy way to share information and photos with friends. Incidents of crime can be lessened and possibly avoided by changing the following habits.

- 1. Using a weak password.** Avoid simple names or words that can be found in a dictionary, even with numbers tacked on the end. Instead, mix upper- and lower-case letters, numbers and symbols. A password should have at least eight characters. One good technique is to insert numbers or symbols in the middle of the word, such as this variant on the word "houses". hO27usEs!
- 2. Leaving your full birth date in your profile.** Listing a full birth date - month, day and year - makes a user an easy target for identity thieves, who can use it to obtain more personal information and potentially gain access to bank and credit card accounts. Choose to show only the month and day or no birthday at all.
- 3. Overlooking useful privacy controls.** Facebook users can limit access for almost everything that is posted on a profile from photos to family information. Consider leaving out contact info, such as phone number and address.
- 4. Posting your child's name in a caption.** Don't use a child's name in photo tags or captions. If someone else does, delete it by clicking Remove Tag. If a child isn't on Facebook and someone includes his or her name in a caption, ask that person to remove the name.
- 5. Mentioning that you'll be away from home.** Three percent of Facebook users surveyed said they had posted this information on their page. Doing so is like putting a "no one's home" sign on the door. Be vague about the dates of any trips.
- 6. Letting search engines find you.** To help prevent strangers from accessing a profile, go to the Search section of Facebook's privacy controls and select Only Friends for Facebook search results. Be sure the box for Public Search isn't checked.
- 7. Permitting youngsters to use Facebook unsupervised.** Facebook limits its members to ages 13 and older, but children younger than that do use it. If there's a young child or teenager in the household who uses Facebook, an adult in the same household should become one of their online friends and use their email as the contact for the account in order to receive notification and monitor activity.