

Tech Tip—*Watch Your Wireless*

Many of us are now wireless. It's convenient. It's easy. Just set up your laptop or handheld device and access the Internet to shop, pay bills, read e-mail, do homework, play an online game, or just chat. Right?

Not so fast! Think security first. Wireless surfing—whether at home or in public—can make you an easy target. Savvy wireless hackers don't even have to attack your computer to break into it through a wireless connection. They can just sit and wait for you to provide your information to them. Most Wi-Fi freeloaders are just looking to surf an open Internet connection, but some may break in to read your hard drive, plant malicious software, or commit criminal activity using your computer address. Worry less about going wireless by following a few basic security steps.

1) Secure your system

When you buy a router for wireless surfing at home, its security may not go on automatically. Make sure you enable the router's security. Use a firewall, keep your software and operating system updated and turn off file-sharing.

2) Disconnect

When surfing in a public place, like a cyber café, or an airport, don't simply turn off your laptop and leave. Remember to click on the icon that disconnects your computer from the wireless network.

3) Be careful shopping

Avoid sending sensitive information when using a wireless network. If that's not possible, make sure the Web site you are using supports a secure connection. A padlock symbol appears in Web browsers when you communicate with a secure Web site.

4) Pick a good password

Your login information may be available to the public, unless you change it often. In a recent survey a researcher was able to uncover the default login and passwords for three of his neighbors with a simple Google search.

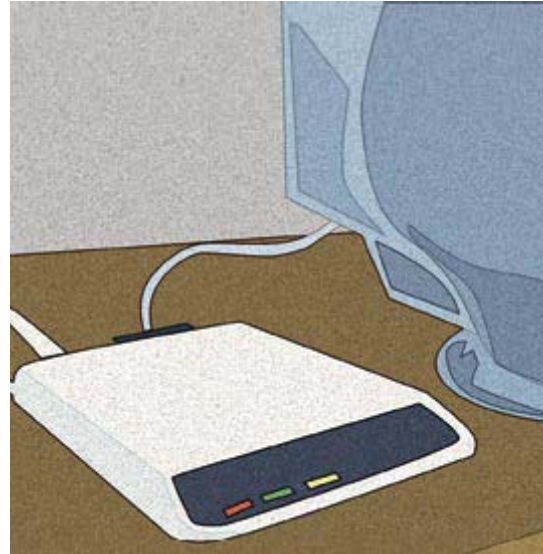
5) Check webmail security

Is the security for your webmail turned on? Check with your webmail service provider to make sure it's operating.

6) Turn off

You should turn a laptop's Wi-Fi function off when it's not being used in order to avoid accidentally connecting to a non-secured network.

Of course, no network is 100% secure. That's the nature of wireless. But even if complete security is an unreachable goal, taking a few simple steps is far better than doing nothing at all.



About i-SAFE

Founded in 1998 and active in all 50 states, i-SAFE Inc. is the leader in Internet safety education. i-SAFE is a nonprofit foundation whose mission is to educate and empower students, parents, seniors, and community members to safely and responsibly take control of their Internet experiences. i-SAFE provides knowledge that enables them to recognize and avoid dangerous, destructive, or unlawful online behavior, and to respond appropriately. This is accomplished through dynamic K through 12 curriculum and community-outreach programs to students, parents, law enforcement, and community leaders. i-SAFE is the only Internet safety foundation to effectively combine these elements. www.isafe.org