General Information

Tips For Revealing Personal Information

Stop
Don't share Social Security number, bank-account personal identification number (PIN), mother's maiden name, medical information, legal history, specific financial information (tax history, savings, mortgage, and so on), travel plans, employment history, and information about friends and relatives, including their home and e-mail addresses and telephone numbers.

Caution
Think twice before sharing telephone number, street address, date of birth, marital status, employer, education, e-mail address, shopping preferences (music, books, favorite brand names, and the like), credit card number, hobbies and interests, affiliations (club memberships, political associations), and Web sites you've visited.

Go
You can typically share zip code, age, salary range, opinion surveys, and occupation. (Note: This information is safe to provide only when not transmitted along with other, more specific personal information.)

Tips for Protecting your Identity

- Burn or shred, with a cross shredder, any mail or financial papers with your personal information on it. Never recycle them.
- Call 1-888-5optout and ask to stop credit card companies from sending pre-approved credit card applications to your house. They are ticking identity theft time bombs.
- Ask your credit card firm to cease delivery of "convenience checks." They, too, are ticking time bombs.
- You're entitled to one free credit report each year. Get it as soon as possible and review it carefully.
- Order a credit report a month or more before you make a big purchase or apply for credit, to be sure there are no surprises in your history.
- Hassle companies that ask for personal information, such as your phone number at a checkout line. The harder we make it on companies, the less they will be inclined to continue the practice.
- It's impossible to tell what's real and what's fake online. Just delete any e-mail that asks for personal information.
- Just hang up on telemarketers, particularly ones who seem to be fishing for personal information, like your birthday.
- Limit the number of credit cards you hold, and religiously inspect your financial statements each month. Consumer rights quickly fade over time; the sooner you discover an identity theft incident, the better.
- Most of the time, you can't prevent an ID theft incident from occuring, because two-thirds of the time, some company that leaked the data is to blame. So be prepared, and be organized. Save paper bank records for a year, at least. You'll need them to prove your account balance in the event of a ID theft incident.

For more information on Internet privacy, visit the following sites:

- **Privacy Foundation**,
- **Electronic Privacy Information Center**,

- **Privacy.Org**.

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