

# How to keep your information safe

## Using your home computer

### 1. Run anti-virus software regularly

You can install Symantec AntiVirus, available free to students and faculty at the Graduate Center. To download, login into your PORTAL account (different from your GC account) and click on

CUNY e-MALL at <https://portal.cuny.edu/portal/site/cuny/index.jsp?epi-content=LOGIN>

Configure your anti-virus software to scan your computer for viruses on a daily basis and to check for the updates automatically every week.

### 2. Protect against spyware

Spyware (adware, malware) is malicious software that collects personal information about users without their informed consent. Spyware may substantially slow down your system and in some cases fatally damage it.

Ad-aware is a free spyware-removing tool available at <http://www.lavasoft.com>

### 3. Turn your computer off when not in use

Your computer cannot be infected or invaded when it is not connected to the network. This is important when you will be away from your

system longer than a few days.

If you haven't turned on your computer in a few days, be sure to check for updates for software and antivirus files

### 4. Keep your computer updated

Regularly update your computer's operating system and Internet browser software. These updates routinely include security enhancements.

To sign up for Microsoft updates, visit <http://update.microsoft.com/windowsupdate>

### 5. Personal firewall

Personal firewall is a piece of software that controls communications to and from the user's PC to the internet, permitting or denying communications based on a security policy.

Firewall can alert you to possible intrusions.

You can verify that Windows Firewall is enabled on your computer at: <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/networking/security/winfirewall.msp>

### 6. Limit access to your computer

On a Windows XP-based computer, you can share files among users. Simple File Sharing is always turned on in Windows XP Home Edition-based computers.

If you don't need to give others access to programs and files on your system, turn sharing

off.

## Using computer at the Graduate Center

### 7. Use strong passwords

GC account password requirements

- 8 to 15 characters long
- at least one capital letter
- at least one lower case letter
- at least one number or special character
- can't be your name
- can't be any of your last 3 passwords

Remember to change the default password you were assigned when you first signed up for a GC account or when your password was reset by the Help Desk staff. When logged onto the GC network, click CTRL-ALT-DEL to change your password at any time during the semester. Note: GC account passwords expire automatically every 180 days.

### 8. Log off or lock the workstation when leaving it unattended

- When working in the Graduate Center, click CTRL-ALT-DEL to lock the machine whenever leaving it unattended
- Remember to always log off from the GC network.

## *Always remember*

### **9. Use caution opening e-mail attachments**

- Don't open any attachment unless you know whom it's from and you were expecting it.
- If you receive an e-mail message with an attachment from someone you don't know, delete it immediately.
- Use an e-mail program with spam filtering built-in, such as Microsoft Office Outlook 2007 or install anti-spam software to filter out unwanted e-mails.

### **10. Be aware of phishing!**

Phishing is the practice of tricking someone into giving out confidential information (passwords, bank accounts or credit card numbers) that will be used for identity theft. Frequently these e-mails come from familiar sounding names of banks or internet and e-mail service providers and have somewhat threatening tone.

You can report phishing activity to the US government at [http://www.us-cert.gov/nav/report\\_phishing.html](http://www.us-cert.gov/nav/report_phishing.html)

### **11. Peer-to-peer file sharing slows down normal computer functioning and can be harmful**

Peer to peer file sharing programs such as Lime

Ware, BitTorrent, etc significantly slow down not only your computer but the entire network. Never use these programs on campus. Most of the time, using P2P file sharing is illegal and it makes your computer vulnerable to the outside intrusions

## *Other useful links*

### **CUNY Information Security Office**

CUNY Issued Security Advisories  
<http://security.cuny.edu>

### **Cyber Security Tips**

Cyber Security Tips describe and offer advice about common security issues for non-technical computer users.  
<http://www.us-cert.gov/cas/tips/>

### **Microsoft password checker**

tests the strength of your password  
[http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/privacy/password\\_checker.msp#](http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/privacy/password_checker.msp#)

## *Help at the Graduate Center*

Office of the Information Technology  
<http://web.gc.cuny.edu/informationresources/>

Help Desk: 212-817-7300  
[helpdesk@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:helpdesk@gc.cuny.edu)



# Computer Security and Identity Protection:

## *11 tips to keep your system fast and safe*



The Office of Information Technology  
Spring 2007