

Computer Tamers & Woman to Woman Computing

Computer Training & Consultation, Web Design & Maintenance

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Computer Safety Recommendations & Instructions

Mozilla Firefox Web Browser

Mozilla's "Firefox" browser replaces Microsoft's Internet Explorer. This is a better, smaller browser program for accessing internet web pages, and it loads pages much more quickly. Click on "Help" then on "For Internet Explorer Users" to get details of the differences between the programs. All "Favourites" should have imported directly into the "Bookmarks" list. Right click on any link to open a new tab, rather than left clicking to open a new window. This allows you to see at a glance all open web pages, and switch between them easily by clicking on the tabs. NOTE: DO NOT use the link from MSN Messenger to check email – use Firefox and go to www.hotmail.com

If you go to a website that shows "Missing plugin" you can safely click on "Install plugin" as it will go to the mozilla site to get the little program you need (like Java, Flash or Shockwave) so you can use Firefox to see almost any page online.

Avast Antivirus

Avast will update itself regularly (at least daily). It checks all files (web pages, file transfers, email) going in and out of the computer. It is free and legal, but you must register every 12 months to keep it free. Please be aware that it "talks out loud" so you're not surprised by the nice male voice coming from the computer.

AVG Antivirus

Update daily by double clicking on the tray icon (yellow/black/green/red square), then on "Check for Updates" in the window that pops up, and select the "Priority", "Recommended" and/or "Optional" updates. Once completed, clicking OK when directed will install the updated list of the latest viruses for AVG to monitor.

Spybot Spyware Detector

Check for problems weekly (Thursday is the usual update day) by double clicking on the desktop shortcut. You should check for, download, install, and "immunize" them. Go to "Search and destroy" to "check for problems". It should fix the problems; if it doesn't, click "Fix selected problems" (making sure they are all selected if not done automatically); then go to "Recovery", select any listed and click "Purge" to finish cleaning. If it asks to run again on Windows restart, say "Yes", as it only does that for problems.

AdAware Spyware Detector

Be sure to run this AFTER Spybot each week. When it opens, it will check for updates (or click on the "Update" button). When done, click on "Scan now", "Full scan", and "Scan". This takes a long time! When done, Select any/all items there by clicking in the little boxes, then click on "Privacy Objects" and select any/all items there also. Click on "Remove" and if that doesn't work, click on "Quarantine", then "Finish", and exit the program.

Google

Google is the best search engine, in my opinion, and SHOULD be used by everyone to find the proper website they are looking for. The porn "kings" use domain names that sound legitimate, such as whitehouse.com, nasa.com, and microdof.com - counting on mistypes for the real websites. Use Google and you'll find the legitimate site is whitehouse.gov (and the others are nasa.gov and microsoft.com).

ZoneAlarm Firewall

The best firewall, in my opinion, is ZoneAlarm, which is a very strong firewall, and “locks” access to your computer completely, both to incoming and outgoing traffic (such as spyware “phoning home”). It will ask for permission for each type of access, and you can give a “key” to your computer by clicking “Remember this setting” and “Allow”, so that program won’t bother you again, until and unless it is updated and “changes”. Then ZoneAlarm will alert you that a program has changed, and again ask for permission. Some people get confused by this, but there is an excellent flash tutorial which will play on completion of installation, if you allow it, and can be accessed any time by just double clicking on the ZA icon on the taskbar, and again on “Flash tutorial”. (Flash is a type of web animation.) By proper use of the “Remember this setting” option, you will have a silent, almost impenetrable, wall of protection, to keep the “bad guys” out, and your private data in!

NOTE: All programs above are available through my website, click on “Security” to get installation instructions and links to the free version of the programs. Some of the programs require small fees for commercial use, but some are free for anyone.

Keeping Yourself Safe Online

There are few simple things we can all do, especially as women, to stay safe, personally, online.

- 1) Use a “disposable” email address, from a free website, such as hotmail.com, yahoo.com, canada.com, etc. DO NOT put your whole name on that account, but only your first name. Mine is sheila.ca@gmail.com which does identify me as female, but doesn’t indicate country, city, nor my last name.
- 2) If you do want an account with your last name, put on only initials for the first name, so you don’t identify yourself as female unless you choose to. (I use scaldler@mail.com for this purpose.)
- 3) When talking to others online, be general, such as “Ottawa” if you want to give a city, but not “Nepean” - too much information!
- 4) If you decide to meet someone in person whom you have met online, do all the background checking you can. Ask for a phone number “in case you can’t make it”, and workplace. These are easy to check, and can provide valuable information if anything goes wrong. Insist on knowing first and last names.
- 5) Arrange a neutral, busy location for meetings, such as Tim Horton’s. Be sure to tell a friend where you’re going, and arrange a time to check in. (Cell phones are great for receiving checkup calls from friends!) Give that friend all the information you’ve collected.
- 6) Despite all the cautions I’ve provided, remember that most people are nice and have good intentions. But don’t forget that it only takes one bad experience to put you in danger.

Please note: Read and remember the instructions in the “Family Internet Contract” - they are good rules for adults, too!