



How safe is my computer?

Contrary to everything you read your computer is pretty safe out of the box. If you read and follow the few simple tips below you can be pretty sure your computer and your use of the Internet is perfectly safe. The following are intended to be helpful. But as with all our advice the decision on whether or not to follow it is entirely your own responsibility.

Access

There is absolutely **NO** reason why anybody needs to access your computer remotely especially not Microsoft so if you get a phone call saying there is something wrong with your computer and they are going to check it, tell them to take a long walk off a short pier!

Firewall

You might think of a firewall as a brick wall around your computer protecting it from the outside. It allows you to get out to browse the Internet but prevents anything else from getting in.

By default most versions of Windows have a firewall in place as standard, leave it there.

Anti-Virus

You **MUST** have some sort of Anti-Virus program on your computer, there are several free Anti-Virus programs available and even the ones you pay for, don't cost a lot, typically £15.00-£20.00 a year so there is no excuse for not having Anti-Virus software on your computer.

Updates

Computer software manufacturers are constantly updating their software to improve both the functionality and safety of their products. Commonly you will get questions from your computer asking if Microsoft, Adobe, Java and your anti-virus can update themselves, please let them. However, if you are not sure about the requesting software then seek advice before allowing updates.

Sensitive Data

In general it is not a good idea to keep things like password lists, bank details etc. on your computer, in fact you shouldn't keep this data in any form other than in your mind.

However as we grow older, we trust our memory less and less, so it is natural to turn to the computer. If you are going to do this then keep the data on a memory stick and keep the memory stick locked away. This way it isn't on your machine and if your machine gets a virus, gets wiped or stolen, you still have the important information.

Get Educated

To be blunt, all the protection in the world won't save you from yourself. Don't open email attachments that you aren't positive are OK.

Phishing

What is Phishing – it is fishing for your data, the bad guys cast a wide net by automatically emailing everybody their software can think up and asking for sensitive data. Remember, **NOBODY** legitimate will ask you for sensitive data via email, not your Bank, Building Society, Microsoft or anybody else. **Don't give it to them!**

Here are some don'ts to help guide you:

- Don't fall for phishing scams.
- Don't click on links in emails that you aren't positive are safe.
- Don't install "free" software without checking it out first - many "free" packages are free because they come loaded with spyware, adware and worse.
- Don't say "OK" - When visiting a web site and you get a pop-up asking if it's ok to install some software you're not sure of because you've never heard of it.
- Don't ignore it - if you are not sure about some security warning you've been given.

For further information ask any of the Silver City Tutors or have a look at [Ask Leo](#)