Online safety and security is important.

Please tear this out and keep it next to your computer.

At AOL, we believe that every Internet user should be free to enjoy the Internet without worrying about the potential risks. That's why we're focused on improving online safety and security for our customers.

We've also created this short guide so you know what to be aware of whether you are currently an AOL customer or not. Simply use our tips to help reduce the risks and make the most of all the great stuff the Internet has to offer.

Protect your privacy

Spam is the online version of junk mail. It's intrusive, annoying, and can clog up your in-box with emails about products or services you have no interest in.

**Tips:**
- Never respond to junk emails as that confirms your email address is valid
- Set up a separate email address for visiting public areas of the Internet, such as chat rooms and message boards
- Use a spam filter to block unsolicited emails before they reach you

Spyware refers to small programmes that install themselves on your computer without your knowledge, usually when you download a file or click on a link. These programmes monitor the sites you visit on the Web, so as well as slowing down your computer, they can potentially violate your privacy.

**Tips:**
- Be careful about what you download, especially if you have any doubts about the source
- Install spyware protection software that will detect and remove spyware files

Pop-ups are small windows, often containing adverts, that literally 'pop-up' onto your screen when you're online.

**Tips:**
- Make the most of pop-up blocking software, which should be available from your ISP

Protect your computer

Firewall software helps to protect your computer or home network against unauthorised access while you are online.

It puts a protective barrier between your computer and the Internet, reducing the risk of hackers accessing private information such as your bank details. If you have an always-on broadband connection, a firewall is vital.

**Tips:**
- Check whether your ISP provides firewall software as part of your package
- If not, install personal firewall software on your desktop

Viruses can transfer information from computer to computer via the Internet and if they get into your system they can wreak havoc, slowing down your computer and even resulting in the loss of data.

Most viruses, trojans and worms arrive via email, so be vigilant when downloading attachments.

**Tips:**
- Choose an ISP that automatically scans email attachments for viruses
- Never download or open attachments from people you don't know
- Install anti-virus software and make sure you update it regularly

Protect your identity

Recent figures show that identity theft is on the increase in the UK. **Phishing** is one way in which fraudsters go about this.

Phishers send out hoax emails or direct you to fake pages in front of Web sites claiming to be from companies you trust and requesting that you verify personal details such as your credit card number or password.

**Tips:**
- Look out for spelling and grammatical errors and check the email header for anything unusual
- Never give out any personal information in response to unsolicited emails, pop-ups or Web pages - if you are unsure about something, contact the company it purports to be from or log on to their official Web site
- Report suspect emails to the company they claim to be from and to your ISP

Protect your family

The Internet is a great resource for children and teenagers but there are some things on the Internet that you would not want them to see.

Parental supervision is crucial, but there are also various tools and features available to help you protect your children online.

**Tips:**
- Use Parental Controls so you can decide which Web sites your children access, who they can email, and even how long they spend online
- Make sure your children only visit moderated chat rooms

We hope this guide has given you some useful tips for when you go online.

At AOL, we're committed to making the Internet safer and more secure for our customers. In fact, we've recently launched a one-stop Safety and Security Centre that has a wide range of advice, tools and features in one place to help reduce the risks.

If you'd like to find out more about online safety and security, visit our Web site at [www.aol.co.uk/security](http://www.aol.co.uk/security)