

What LGBT Communities Should Know About Online Safety

Whether you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or straight, how you conduct yourself online can reveal a lot about you – perhaps more than you'd be comfortable sharing. One of the biggest concerns for LGBT individuals is the amount of information across multiple social platforms that could easily expose their sexual orientation or gender identity. As a result, your online conduct - from your interactions on social networks to the mobile apps you download - can lead to real-life unintended consequences.

STOP. THINK. CONNECT. – the global cybersecurity awareness campaign – has partnered with the LGBT Technology Partnership to provide these tips that will help keep you and your online identity more safe and secure.

The first step to protect yourself is to STOP. THINK. CONNECT. STOP: Take security precautions. THINK: Understand the consequences of your actions and behaviors. CONNECT: Enjoy the benefits of the Internet. Here are other tips:

Own Your Online Presence

If you are not open about your LGBT identity, scrutinize every click with great care, from Likes to posting photos and retweeting.

- **Review privacy settings.** Learn about the privacy/security settings on social networks and tailor them to your comfort level for information sharing.
- **Enable instant notifications.** Activate text or email notifications so you can decide which posts and photos involving you are posted publicly.
- **Search for yourself.** Perform routine Internet searches of your name and any words with which you wouldn't want to be associated. Find something you don't like? Contact the website administrator immediately to have that content altered or removed.

Protect Your Personal Information

Studies indicate that LGBT communities rely on the Internet and mobile apps for dating in significantly higher proportions than heterosexual singles, but sharing too much information can backfire.

- **Think before you act.** Be wary of communications that push you for immediate action or ask for personal information. People online aren't always as they appear.
- **Once posted, always posted.** Think twice before sending or posting pictures or comments you would not want your parents, co-workers or other friends to see.
- **Think before you app.** Before you download apps, review privacy policies and understand what data – location, access to your social networks, photos, etc. – is accessed and shared.

Be a Good Online Citizen

Practicing good online habits benefits the global digital community.

- **Post only about others as you would have them post about you.** If you or someone you know is a victim of online harassment, ignore the abuser, but not the abuse. Tell a trusted adult, block the abuser and maintain digital and hard copy records of online activity to give authorities, if contacted.
- **Safer for me, more secure for all.** What you do online has the potential to affect everyone – at home, at work and around the world. Your responsible behavior online helps keep others safe, too.

For more information about how to maintain your online presence, visit LGBTTechPartnership.org and StopThinkConnect.org.