Browsing

Protecting Your Browser

Your web browser is your primary tool for interacting with the Internet. It is also a common target for cyber attackers. By protecting your browser, you protect yourself against many of today's attacks.

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When you go online to shop, share pictures with friends, or read the news, you are most likely using a browser. Browsers are one of the primary ways we interact with the Internet. As a result, browsers are also a primary target for cyber attackers.

Keep your shield strong. Protect against browser attacks by always using the latest version of your browser. Updated browsers have the latest security patches and are much harder for cyber attackers to hack into. Most browsers today will automatically update themselves or warn you when you need to update them, which usually requires nothing more than restarting your browser. Not sure if your browser is the latest version? Contact the help desk or information security team to confirm.

Stay safe online by not connecting to websites when you receive a browser warning. Modern browsers can recognize certain malicious websites designed to cause you harm. If your browser warns you that the website you are about to visit is dangerous, close that browser tab and find the information you need on a different and safer website. Remember, even websites you have visited before or you feel are trusted may suddenly become dangerous. One common example is a cyber attacker compromising your favorite website and installing dangerous software on it. As a result, whenever someone visits the hacked website, that software will attempt to break into that person's browser.

Before sending sensitive information online with your browser, such as when you are submitting your credit card for an online purchase, make sure your browser is encrypting all the communications between it and the website. Encryption scrambles the information passed between your computer and the destination so only the authorized website can read it. To confirm if your browser is using encryption, look for the website address in the top of your browser. Make sure the website address starts with HTTPS, has a locked padlock icon in the status bar, and the padlock is showing up as green.

Another element you must protect are your browser plug-ins. Plug-ins or add-ons are small pieces of software added to browsers that are used for additional features, such as playing games, watching movies, or text editing. Every plug-in that you install in your browser can add additional vulnerabilities. Only install plug-ins or add-ons in your browser if you absolutely need them and you have prior approval. Once installed, just like with your browser, always be sure to keep your plug-ins updated and current.

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If there are important websites you use regularly, save them as bookmarks. Examples could include your online bank or websites you regularly use for work. This way, you do not have to repeatedly type in the website whenever you want to visit it. Another advantage to using a bookmark is that whenever you need to visit these websites, you know you are visiting the true destination, as opposed to accidently typing the wrong website into your browser.

Finally, when you are finished visiting a website, be sure to log off. For example, if you have been banking online, be sure to log out of the bank website before visiting a different website. This removes sensitive login and password information from your browser. Remember, safe browsing behaviors work to strengthen your shield.

Protecting Your Privacy

In addition to securing your browser against cyber attackers, most browsers also support features to protect your privacy. Often called Privacy or Incognito mode, this means that your browser limits what information it collects about you when you are browsing the Internet. For example, when in privacy mode, most browsers no longer collect cookies, save your browser history, track your search history, or share information about you. While this may limit what you can do with certain websites, it also helps protect what information websites and others can collect about you. No browser can protect and hide everything you do online, but enabling privacy mode on most browsers can help.