
Creating a Cyber Secure Home

Here are some simple, effective steps you can take to create a cyber secure home.

Just as our organization is a target, so too are you at home. Your personal information, personal accounts, personal emails, and even your systems at home are valuable to cyber attackers. In addition, you may not have all the security resources at home that we have within our organization. As such, here are some simple, effective steps you can take to create a cyber secure home.

Almost every connected home starts with a wireless network, called a Wi-Fi network. This is what allows you to wirelessly connect your devices to the Internet. Start securing your home by first securing your wireless network. Your Wi-Fi access point is what controls your wireless network. It most likely came with a default administrator username and password. At a minimum, be sure you change the password after the access point is configured and, if possible, change the default username as well. This helps ensure that only you can make changes to its configuration. Next, change the default name of your wireless network, commonly known as the SSID. Choose a name that cannot be tied back to your address or your family name.

Be sure to also configure your wireless network to use the strongest encryption available. Older, weaker forms of encryption, such as WEP, are not secure and should not be used. Finally choose a strong password for people to be able to access your wireless network.

Just like our organization, your home can also be a target.

Once you have secured your wireless network, the next step is to secure the devices connected to it. This begins with knowing what devices you have. Years ago this was easy, as only your computers were likely connected to the Internet. Now, smart TVs, gaming consoles, thermostats, baby monitors, and even lights can connect to your home network. Once you know what is connected, make sure these devices each use a strong, unique password. Far too many devices nowadays ship with default passwords that anyone can learn simply by going to the Internet. In addition, you most likely only have to set the password once, so it is a simple process. Can't remember all of your passwords? Consider using a password manager to manage all of your personal passwords. In addition, ensure all of your devices' operating systems, browsers, and apps are kept updated. If a device has an auto-update feature, be sure to enable it. For computers and mobile devices, be sure to enable firewalls and anti-virus whenever possible.

For your personal online accounts, always enable two-step verification whenever you can, as this is one of the most effective steps you can take to protect them. If you have children, consider getting a separate computer or device just for them. Children are very curious and are always trying new things online, which could infect your computer. Be sure to check with your Internet service provider, as they may have resources to help protect your home network.

Finally, be sure you are doing regular backups of your information, such as family pictures or valuable documents. Whether you use external hard drives or Cloud services, choose an automated method that best fits your needs. If one of your computers or devices does get hacked, often the only way you can recover your personal files is from a backup.

Fortunately, just taking some simple steps can go a long way to creating a cyber secure home.

Ultimately, you are your own best defense, so use common sense. If something seems odd or too good to be true, it may be an attack.

WHICH ANTI-VIRUS IS BEST?

Two common questions people ask are what anti-virus software is the best and which firewall program they should buy. It really does not matter as long as the solution comes from a well-known, trusted security company. Most home-use security products are very similar to each other in functionality. The one that is best for you is most likely whichever product you find the easiest to use. In addition, most security products now come packaged as a suite. This means all the different security programs, such as firewalls, anti-virus, and web filters, are included as a single solution.

The advantage of a combined package is that all the different tools you need to secure your computer are integrated into a single program and interface. If you do purchase such a solution, make sure it is enabled and always running the latest version.