

Safeguarding Your Online Presence: Privacy Best Practices for Social Media

In today's interconnected world, where digital interactions shape our daily routines, it's undeniable that social media platforms play a significant role in both our personal and professional lives. As we connect with others on these platforms, it is crucial to prioritize the security of your personal information. This fact sheet outlines best practices to safeguard your private information effectively.

Choose Complex and Unique Passwords

A strong and unique password is your first line of defense against unauthorized access to your accounts and sensitive information. Following are tips to create a strong password:

- » Password Length is Important
 - Your password should be at least 12 characters long. The longer, the better!
- » Mix It Up
 - Use a combination of upper and lower case letters, numbers, and special characters (!, @, #, \$, %). Adding complexity makes your password more secure.
- » No Dictionary Words (or combinations of dictionary words)
 - Instead, use misspelled words, acronyms, or alternate spellings to make your password less predictable.
 - The more [random the combination of words or phrases](#), the better.
- » Regular Updates
 - Change your passwords periodically. It's good practice to update our passwords every four to six months.

Creating a strong, unique password might take a bit more effort, but it significantly enhances the security of your accounts and personal information. Remember, the more unique and complex your password, the better protected you are against potential threats.

Enable Multi-factor Authentication (MFA)

Multi-factor authentication (MFA) adds an extra layer of security to your accounts beyond just the password.

- » What is MFA?
 - MFA requires additional forms of verification before you can access an account. This typically includes sending an additional passcode to a registered device, email address, or authentication app (e.g., Google Authenticator) to verify it's you.
- » Setup Process: To enable MFA, you'll usually need to link your account to a phone number, email address, or an authentication app. Once set up, you'll need this additional factor to log in.

Whenever possible, enable MFA for your accounts. For more details about MFA, read this resource from the [Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency](#).

Understand Public vs. Private Accounts

Understanding the difference between public and private social media accounts is essential for managing your online presence effectively.

Public Accounts

- » Broad Audience
 - Public accounts are visible to everyone, even those who are not connected with you. Your posts can be seen by anyone on the platform and may also appear in search engine results.
- » Widely Shared Content
 - Public accounts are suitable for sharing content meant for a wide audience, such as informative articles, public events, or content you want to reach a broader audience.
- » Networking and Reach
 - Public accounts are great for networking and connecting with new people who share similar interests or professional goals.
- » Limited Privacy Control
 - Public accounts offer limited privacy controls. While you can control what you post, you can't control who sees it once it's shared publicly.

Private Accounts

- » Restricted Audience
 - Private accounts limit access to only approved followers. You have control over who can see your posts, and your content is shielded from public view.
- » Personal Sharing
 - Private accounts are ideal for sharing personal moments, photos, and updates with close friends and family.
- » Safer Online Space
 - By keeping your account private, you create a safer space with a more controlled environment for sharing.

Limit Third Party App Permissions

What you share on social media might become public someday, even if you only meant it for certain individuals or followers. This could happen because of things like hackers, poor data management practices, or companies selling your information. Sometimes, social media apps terms of service explicitly claim ownership of all posted content.

To protect your personal information by using strong privacy settings that stop apps from sharing your info: [Know what information the social media app or platform will be able to access.](#)

For More Information Contact VA Privacy Service

Privacy Hotline: 202-273-5070 | [Email VA Privacy Service](#)