

## Protect Yourself from Identity Theft this Holiday Season!

As the holiday season approaches, we are reminded that not everyone is interested in spreading good cheer. There is the ever present threat of thieves and hackers aimed at retrieving and selling your personal information.

Here are some thoughts about how to keep you, and your personal information safe this season and throughout the year.

1. DO NOT reveal your personal information online, unless you are certain the source is authentic.
2. DO update your personal antivirus software regularly.
3. DO install anti-spyware programs on your computer and update it regularly as well.
4. DO create strong passwords using a combination of letters, numbers or even special characters.
5. DO check your accounts often. If something seems unusual, report it immediately.
6. DO check your credit report at least annually. Remember, you have access to reports from all three credit bureaus annually at [annualcreditreport.com](http://annualcreditreport.com)
7. DO be sure to sign out of secure sites properly each time.
8. DO be aware of ATM skimming machines. If the machine you are about to use looks as though it has been appended, DO NOT use it. Find another location or use the cash back option on your next MasterCard Debit Card transaction.

Personal knowledge and awareness are the first lines of defense against criminals out to steal your personal information. Be diligent in your actions, and help keep those pesky offenders at bay this season.

