

Social Media Safety

Tips for Older Adults to Stay Protected

Programs @ The Blue Marble

Social media connects us with friends, family, and communities, but it also brings risks that can affect anyone, especially older adults. Scammers, privacy breaches, and misinformation are common dangers that can cause real harm. Understanding how to stay safe online helps older adults enjoy social media without worry. This post shares practical tips to protect your privacy, recognize threats, and use social media confidently.



Smartphone showing social media app on wooden table

Protect Your Personal Information

One of the biggest risks on social media is sharing too much personal information. Scammers often use details like your birthdate, address, or phone number to steal your identity or access your accounts.

- Avoid posting sensitive details publicly. Keep your birthday, home address, phone number, and financial information private.
- Use privacy settings to control who can see your posts and profile information. Most platforms let you limit visibility to friends or approved followers.

- Be cautious when accepting friend requests or messages from people you don't know. Scammers often create fake profiles to gain trust.

For example, Mary, a 68-year-old retiree, once shared a photo with her full address visible on a package in the background. A scammer used that information to send fake bills. After learning about privacy settings, she adjusted her profile to restrict access and stopped sharing location details in photos.

Recognize and Avoid Scams

Scammers target older adults with fake offers, urgent messages, or requests for money. Knowing common tactics helps you avoid falling victim.

- Be skeptical of messages asking for money, gift cards, or personal details, even if they appear to come from friends or family.
- Watch for spelling errors, unusual language, or pressure to act quickly. These are signs of phishing attempts.
- Never click on suspicious links or download attachments from unknown sources.

For instance, John received a message claiming to be from his grandson asking for emergency money. He called his grandson directly to confirm and avoided losing money. This simple step can save you from many scams.



Laptop screen with phishing warning message

Use Strong Passwords and Two-Factor Authentication

Strong passwords and extra security layers protect your accounts from hackers.

- Create passwords that combine letters, numbers, and symbols. Avoid using easily guessed information like birthdays or names.
- Use a different password for each social media account.
- Enable two-factor authentication (2FA) when available. This adds a second step, like a code sent to your phone, to verify your identity.



Two-factor authentication: login with password, receive a code on your phone, then enter the code to access your account.

Many older adults find password managers helpful. These tools store and generate strong passwords, so you don't have to remember them all.

Think Before You Click or Share

Misinformation spreads quickly on social media. Sharing false or misleading content can cause confusion or harm.

- Verify news or information from trusted sources before sharing.
- Avoid clicking on sensational headlines or links that seem too good to be true.
- Report suspicious posts or accounts to the platform.

For example, Susan saw a post claiming a health cure that sounded unrealistic. She checked reputable health websites and found no evidence. By not sharing the post, she helped prevent misinformation from spreading.



Tablet displaying news article with fact-check label

Stay Updated and Ask for Help

Social media platforms update their features and security settings regularly. Staying informed helps you use them safely.

- Review your privacy and security settings every few months.
- Learn about new scams or threats by reading trusted online safety guides.
- Don't hesitate to ask family members or friends for help if you're unsure about something online.

Many community centers and libraries offer free classes on internet safety for older adults. Joining these can boost your confidence and skills.