

Essay 01

Many people find it necessary to constantly maintain a social media presence, but often do not try to protect their identities in their social media accounts. Yet, there are some easy people can take to creatively safeguard their identity while actively participating in social media.

Social media account holders frequently post something about where they are or who they are with. To maintain the security of their identity, people should refrain from making these posts. According to Credit Sesame, 78% of burglars check Facebook, Twitter or Foursquare looking for properties to target. Thieves look for people's posts about when they are leaving for vacation or when they are out of town, known as oversharing. Thieves then know the opportune time to attempt to rob a house because the owner is not at home. Instead, people should not post anything about an upcoming vacation. If they still want to post vacation pictures, they should do so after they come back. By refraining to post these pictures, burglars who check social media will not know when that person is at home, decreasing the chances of that home being targeted by a robbery. Burglars will not even know who the people are since they did not post anything about not being at home. People should also not tag or talk about friends in their posts. Even if a person safeguards their identity on social media, that person's status will be visible to anyone who looks if their friends tag the person in a vacation post or other picture. Despite all of their safeguards, they are unprotected from online or real world crimes once their friends tag them in a post. Instead, people should use services like Shutterfly, which allow users to establish a private website for photo sharing and allow specific people, not strangers or thieves, to be told that they are in the picture, eliminating the threat of a robbery due to social media. Thus, people should not post their location or tag any of their friends in their social media posts to safeguard the identities of their friends and themselves.

In addition, many people do not pay attention to the settings when they create a social media account. In order to safeguard their identity while still maintaining their social media presence, people should ensure that they make their overall account safe. First, people should check their account settings to make sure their account is private. By doing this, the account holder can guarantee that only their real world relatives and friends, as opposed to some random stranger or friend of a friend, can see the account and its posts. All of the account's photos and posts could only be seen by a select amount of people that the account holder can choose. Another key to safeguarding one's identity is to avoid clicking on any pop-ups or other third party applications while participating in social media. After a social media user visits these disreputable websites, hackers can often hack into the user's account through viruses or malware, and learn personal information about their target. By not visiting these disreputable websites in the first place, hackers will have a more difficult time accessing a user's personal data. Through avoiding dishonest websites and maintaining a private account, one can continue to safeguard their identity while engaging in social media.

Overall, a person can still actively involve themselves in social media while protecting their identity. By avoiding posts about upcoming vacations, not clicking on questionable websites and keeping the account private, a social media user will be able to keep using their account while safeguarding their identity.

Essay 02

In today's rapidly changing world, social media is increasing in popularity, but with its meteoric rise comes hidden dangers that many users do not fully grasp. These dangers come in the form of stalkers, information stealers, hackers, solicitors, and many others with ill-intent. However, there are ways to safeguard personal information from such deviants, including ways teens can do so without peers judging for "too much caution." Of course, the most obvious way to do so is having a private account that does not share location or personal information. However, there are more creative ways to go about this, especially for the modern-day teenager.

The first thing that people see while coming across a social media account is the username, profile picture, and bio. Using a real name in usernames can be good for finding friends, but if friends can find someone, so can unwanted others. The best way to deal with this issue is turning the username into a play on words, or making it unsearchable. For instance, if I took my name, Taylor Henriksen, and changed it into Haylor Tenriksen or HenlorTayriksen, my friends would think of the changes as something amusing, but unwanted people could not find my profile. Additionally, the use of a profile picture that clearly displays one's face should be avoided, as this could be used to find other pictures, recognize an individual elsewhere, or post that picture in unwanted locations (such as for explicit content which has happened to many unfortunate and unknowing individuals). Instead of an identifiable photograph, the profile picture could be made into a playful image by using a silly face or a funny picture of a celebrity look alike. If humor isn't a suitable option, an artistic picture from behind or a distant group shot with indistinguishable faces would do the trick.

The other area where information could be taken or abused is through posted content. Social media users, particularly teens, should never use the location setting to show where they

have been, as people can track this. In Snapchat this relates to the “snapmap” friend locator, and in many others this refers to the geotag feature. When posting a picture with a location, add one that does not offer much detail; for example, when hiking, a location such as “middle of nowhere,” “Mount Everest,” or “on top of a mountain,” can be employed so followers get the idea, but do not know exact locations. Additionally, people can still find someone based on a day-to-day routine, even if exact locations are not specified. If someone routinely posts “at Starbucks again,” and later makes it clear that they are at home, and then posts again while at practice, this daily pattern can be tracked. There is a notable tale of a teenager who posted her routine on social media, and a man was able to track her location based on her patterned behavior. He followed her home, but thankfully, he was a police officer who simply warned her about the danger of publicizing a daily routine. This can be avoided by mixing up the daily cycle of posts. Post fun throwbacks to mix it up, or tweet thoughts on the mind instead of locations and actions. Finally, teens should not post pictures with overly-informative details about their personal lives, such as a license plate, school name, house number, etc, because this information can be used to piece together an identity. When wanting to post a picture that has personal information in the background or on a shirt, use fun Snapchat stickers, filters, or emojis to cover them up, and then post the picture safely, while still being able to “look cool.” For teenagers it can be difficult to stay safe through social media because there is a certain level of “coolness” in not caring, but digital safety is very important in protecting identity and reputation. If simple steps such as these can be observed, it can be a lot easier to feel confident in social media presence.

Essay 03

What are some creative ways to safeguard your identity while actively engaging in social media?

“If we don't act now to safeguard our privacy, we could all become victims of identity theft” Bill Nelson. Identity theft is very common in the world and could happen at any moment. Essentially, identity theft can happen while actively using social media. Social media is an avenue used to relate societal obstacles, news, and entertainment through communication that can result in not only local, but global impact. The easiest way to obtain one's identity is through social media with social engineering. Everything in the world requires and holds some sort of identity whether it is a credit card, social security, ID, passport, and of course, social media. Identity is the most important thing to protect.

Protecting identity should be a top priority for all people. Many attackers will use various social engineering attacks to manipulate the victim in giving up confidential information. It can all start with clicking on pop-ups, links, or pictures from any source. There are ways that people can protect themselves from identity theft while on social media. Don't click on links that are sent from strangers, especially if it looks like it is from a malicious source. Clicking on these malicious links can allow the attacker to upload a virus onto the device and infect the network. Avoid tagging or posting specific locations where an attacker could use these aspects as tactics to achieve one's personal identity. Knowing a person's whereabouts from posting on social media can give the attacker a physical approach to tailgate and steal that person's personal information. Also, when using social media, it is best to have two separate accounts, personal and professional. Both sides have its advantages and disadvantages when it comes to enclosing one's

identity. People can create social media sites with a fake identity, which could be a way to secure one's identity. Nonetheless, there are most cases where one must use their real identity to engage in professional networking. In these cases, people have the advantage of using that identity as a form of pretexting; however, it is best to keep social media accounts private and limit the amount of personal information on it. Having internet security on devices, in which one uses their social media accounts on, will automatically protect one from identity theft. Specifically, people can invest in firewalls, pop-up blockers, and anti-virus software to avoid these incidents. Ultimately, one's mind and common sense is the most creative way to safeguard identity while actively using social media.