

Your Personal Data is Like Gold. Don't Let Someone Turn it Into Lead.

By following these simple tips, you can greatly reduce your chances of becoming a victim of identity theft. Also read about pending [Identity Theft legislation](#). (If you have any more tips to offer, [send them here](#).)

- Do not carry your extra credit cards, Social Security card, birth certificate, or passport in your wallet or purse except when necessary. This practice minimizes the amount of information a thief can steal.
- Install a lockable mailbox at your residence to reduce mail theft.
- Take credit card receipts with you. Never toss them in a public trash container.
- Never leave your purse or wallet unattended at work or in church, restaurants, health fitness clubs, parties, or shopping carts. Never leave your purse or wallet in open view in your car, even when your car is locked.
- Destroy all checks immediately after you close a checking account. Destroy or keep in a secure place any courtesy checks that your bank or credit card company sends to you.
- Do not have your bank send your new checks to your home address. Tell the bank that you prefer to pick them up.
- Reconcile your check and credit card statements in a timely fashion, and challenge any purchases you did not make.
- Limit the number of credit cards you have, and cancel any inactive accounts.
- Never give any credit card, bank, or Social Security information to anyone by telephone, even if you made the call, unless you can positively verify that the call is legitimate.
- Minimize exposure of your Social Security and credit card numbers. If the numbers are requested for check-cashing purposes, ask if the business has alternative options such as a check-cashing card.
- Do not allow your financial institution to print your Social Security number on your personal checks.

- Safeguard your credit, debit, and ATM card receipts. [Shred them](#) before discarding.
- Scrutinize your utility and subscription bills to make sure the charges are yours.
- Memorize your passwords and personal identification numbers (PINs) so you do not have to write them down. Be aware of your surroundings to make sure no one is watching you input your PIN.
- Keep a list of all your credit accounts and bank accounts in a secure place so you can quickly call the issuers to inform them about missing or stolen cards. Include account numbers, expiration dates, and telephone numbers of customer service and fraud departments.
- Do not toss pre-approved credit offers in your trash or recycling bin without first [shredding them](#). Dumpster divers use these offers to order credit cards in your name and mail them to their address. Always do the same with other sensitive information like credit card receipts, phone bills, and such.
- If you don't receive your billing statement, notify the company immediately.