

8 tips to protect your identity beyond the computer

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When it comes to identity theft, you need to protect the mailbox at your house as much as your email inbox, according to a new report from the Center for Identity at The University of Texas at Austin.

The 2017 Identity Theft Assessment and Prediction report sheds light on the criminal processes behind [identity theft](#). The report analyzed identity

theft incidents between 2006 and 2016 and found that approximately 50 percent of the crimes exploited nondigital [information](#) sources, such as mailed checks or empty prescription drug containers.

"These new findings leave no doubt that criminals are taking advantage of nondigital vulnerabilities," said Suzanne Barber, director of the Center for Identity. "Protection of sensitive personal information requires diligence across what we call the 'ID360 of identity' encompassing the technology, processes and people accessing, storing and using these valuable identity assets."

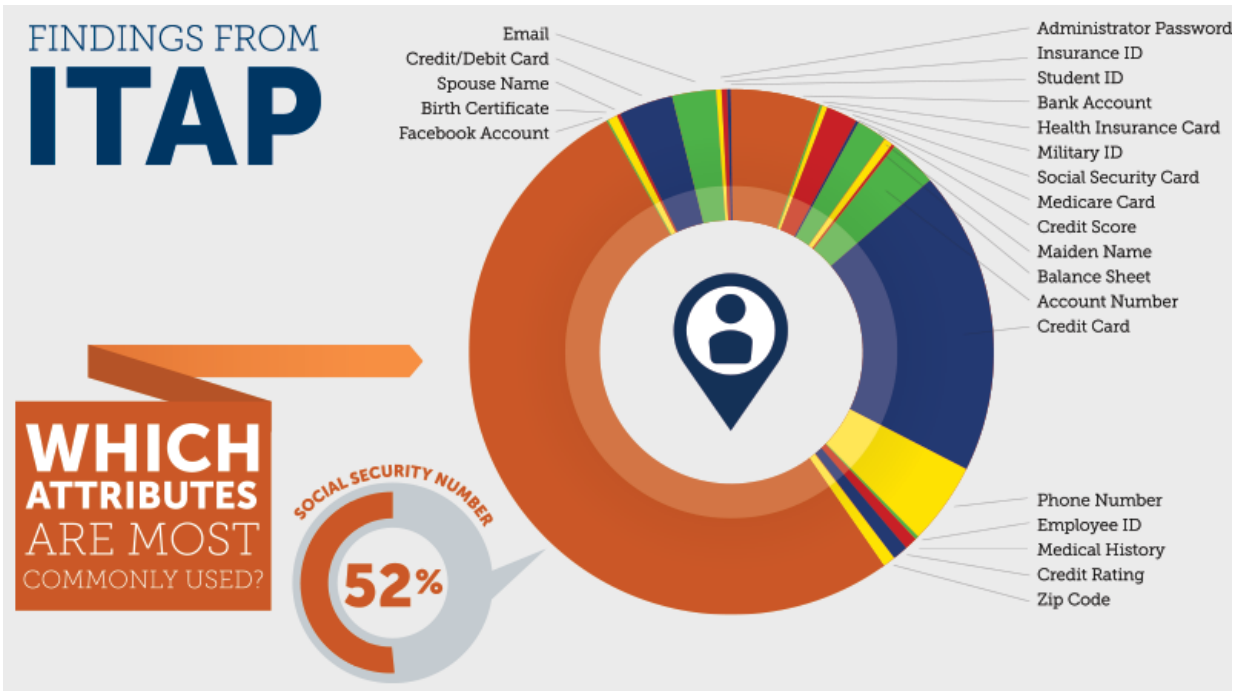
Identity thieves are on the lookout for human error to make their next move.

These eight tips can help keep you from being a victim:

1. Never leave sensitive items in the car: checkbooks, mail, purses, wallets. Breaking into a car is one of the easiest ways for [identity](#) thieves to get your vital information.
2. Do not provide information over the phone unless you initiate the call. Most organizations will not contact you and ask for information, and you can always hang up and call back a public number listed for the organization.
3. Protect or destroy sensitive documents. Shred documents with your personal identifying information that you don't need. Get a safe for the ones you do, but never simply throw away sensitive paper documents—criminals still dumpster dive.
4. Lock up your devices. Control physical access to your devices and use password protection. You have more sensitive data on your devices than you realize. Don't leave your computer in your car or in unsecured areas.
5. Check your credit report frequently, and monitor your bank and credit card statements. This may or may not be obvious, but it is

still essential. Not only will this help alert you to any possible compromise, it will also keep you on top of what accounts you have and should be protecting.

6. Do not carry highly [sensitive documents](#) around or on your person unless specifically needed. If you absolutely have to take a birth certificate, passport or Social Security card somewhere with you, be sure to keep them safe and accounted for, and to store them securely at home when finished.
7. Always put your outgoing mail **INSIDE** the post office. Don't even put it in the outside receptacle, and never put it in your mailbox. Outgoing mail frequently contains checks, account numbers and other highly valuable information, and [identity thieves](#) know this. They frequently steal mail (both incoming and outgoing) in search of assets to exploit.
8. Make organizations accountable. Get in the habit of asking organizations what they plan to do with your personal identifiable information and protected health information. Will they sell it? Give it away? Protect it? As a consumer, you have choices where to take your business. Be sure to avoid those that don't make an explicit effort to protect your sensitive information.



Credit: Center for Identity

Provided by University of Texas at Austin

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