

Dec. 8, 2020, 5:23 p.m. | 7 minute read | 19,167 views

10 Tips for Safe Internet Browsing

Safety Alert: Computer use can be monitored and it is impossible to completely clear your browser history. If you are afraid your internet usage might be monitored, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233 or 800-787-3224 en Español.

Most of us use smartphones, hand-held devices and computers without thinking twice about safe internet browsing. But every online interaction leaves a trail of electronic breadcrumbs others can track.

If you feel that your partner is monitoring your online activity, you might be right. Today's [technology has allowed for new forms of domestic abuse](#), by increasing:

- Access to private information
- Control over online accounts
- Use of mobile devices to track a person's whereabouts

Start practicing safe internet browsing today by following these 10 tips.

1. Browse the internet somewhere else.

The safest way to search for sensitive information on the internet — such as getting help with domestic abuse — is to do so on a device you know your partner won't be able to access. For example, you may ask a friend who is practicing safe social distancing to use their computer. Libraries, once they are open again, can also provide safe computer use.

Web browsing on your smartphone is also easily tracked, as are you through their use. Cellphone GPS and tracking software can make it easy for an abuser to track you. You can turn on airplane mode or completely turn off your phone to disable the tracking. Check out these [cellphone safety tips](#).

2. Know the Safe Exit button on Military OneSource.

On Military OneSource, the Safe Exit is a white button on a purple bar at the bottom of website

content related to domestic abuse. If someone appears to be looking over your shoulder, you can quickly exit the site and your webpage will be redirected to Weather.com. Other websites, such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline, use similar Safe Exit buttons.

Other quick-exit keyboard commands include:

- Press CTRL + W on your PC keyboard to quickly close the current open tab.
- Press Command + W on your MAC keyboard to quickly close the open tab.

3. Avoid sharing sensitive information over email or social media apps.

If you are talking to a friend or family member about potential abuse, avoid using email or social media apps. Instead, try to talk in person or over the phone using a secure messenger app such as WhatsApp or Signal. And be sure to [review this guide on phone safety](#) from Military OneSource and the Family Advocacy Program.

Also, if you receive abusive emails or texts, you may want to keep a record of them as you seek help for domestic abuse, stalking or harassment (even by a spouse or partner).

4. Log out of accounts, apps and forums.

If you have logged on to any email account, app or online forum where you may have posted a comment related to domestic abuse, don't forget to log out when you have finished your browsing session so no one else can log in as you or go through your account and read your posts or messages.

5. Lock your computer.

If possible, use a password on your computer so someone else cannot log in and access your browsing history or emails. When you step away from your computer, phone or other device, even if it's for a few minutes, lock your computer. It's good practice for everyone to lock any device that is not in use.

6. Create new email accounts.

Continue to use old email accounts for content that's OK for your partner to see. Create and use your new email account to sign in to websites, apps, forums, etc. Most email accounts are free. Contacts you share with your abuser should not be given your new email address.

7. Switch to private browsing mode.

It's best to make a habit of using the private browsing mode (called "incognito mode" on Google Chrome and "InPrivate" on Internet Explorer). Once enabled, none of the activity on your computer in that browsing window will be stored. Click the links below to view each browser's instructions for how to activate its private browsing mode:

- [Google](#) (computer, Android, iPhone, iPad)
- [Google Chrome](#) (computer, Android, iPhone, iPad)

- [Mozilla Firefox](#)
- [Microsoft Edge](#)
- [Internet Explorer](#)
- [Safari](#) (iPhone, iPad, iPod touch), [Safari](#) (Mac)
- [Opera](#)

8. Consider clearing your browsing history.

After you have researched information on domestic abuse or on how to leave an unsafe relationship, you may want to consider clearing your browsing history. Think of Tips 8, 9 and 10 (clearing the browsing history, cookies and toolbar searches) as a sandwich cookie: you have to eliminate all parts (top, middle, bottom) to get rid of the evidence.

Click on the links below to learn how to delete the browsing history for each search engine.

Keep in mind that if someone is monitoring your computer use, deleting all your browser history, cookies and toolbar searches may raise suspicion. Instead, delete just the websites you have visited that might make an abuser take notice. For example, pages that reference help for domestic abuse.

- [Google](#) (computer, Android, iPhone, iPad)
- [Google Chrome](#) (computer, Android, iPhone, iPad)
- [Mozilla Firefox](#) (computer, Android), [Mozilla Firefox](#) (Mac, iPhone, iPad)
- [Microsoft Edge](#)
- [Internet Explorer](#)
- [Safari](#) (iPhone, iPad, iPod touch), [Safari](#) (Mac)
- [Opera](#)

9. Clear cookies.

If you plan to clear search information, you must always do it in three locations: clearing the browsing history, cookies and toolbar searches. Cookies are small files stored on your computer that you need to remove. Find the link below for the browser you use and click on it to learn how to clear your cookies.

Keep in mind that if someone is monitoring your computer use, deleting all your browser history, cookies and toolbar searches may raise suspicion. Instead, delete just the websites you have visited that might make an abuser take notice. For example, pages that reference help for domestic abuse.

- [Google](#) (computer, Android, iPhone, iPad)
- [Google Chrome](#) (computer, Android, iPhone, iPad)

- [Mozilla Firefox](#)
- [Microsoft Edge](#)
- [Internet Explorer](#)
- [Safari](#) (iPhone, iPad, iPod touch), [Safari](#) (Mac)
- [Opera](#)

10. Erase toolbar searches.

Toolbars keep a record of the search words you have typed into the toolbar search box. It's important to remove this information as well. Remember that this is the final step of three when clearing evidence of searches: clearing the browsing history, cookies and toolbar searches.

Review the links below to learn how to erase toolbar searches from your browser.

Keep in mind that if someone is monitoring your computer use, deleting all your browser history, cookies and toolbar searches may raise suspicion. Instead, delete just the websites you have visited that might make an abuser take notice. For example, pages that reference help for domestic abuse.

- [Google Chrome](#) (computer, Android, iPhone, iPad)
- [Mozilla Firefox](#)
- [Microsoft Edge](#), [Microsoft Edge Legacy](#)
- [Internet Explorer](#)
- [Safari](#)
- [Opera](#)

For more information regarding technology safety, you may wish to consult [this compilation of tips and resources](#) from the Safety Net Project at the National Network to End Domestic Violence.

Inclusion of this information does not imply endorsement of the National Network to End Domestic Violence by the Department of Defense.

For more resources and support for surviving domestic abuse, contact your local [Family Advocacy Program Domestic Abuse Victim Advocate](#). For immediate support, call the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) at 800-799-7233.