**SECURE YOUR COMPUTER**

Keeping your computer secure helps you avoid malware and direct hacking attempts designed to steal your personal information. Here are some ways you can help reduce your online risk when you use your computer at home.

Top Five Tips to Protect Your Computer
- Use a firewall
- Keep all software up to date
- Use antivirus software and keep it current
- Make sure your passwords are well-chosen and protected
- Stay away from pirated materials

Firewall

A Firewall is a network security device that monitors and filters incoming and outgoing network traffic based on an organization's previously established security policies. At its most basic, a firewall is essentially the barrier that sits between a private internal network and the public internet. Windows has a firewall already built in and automatically turned on.
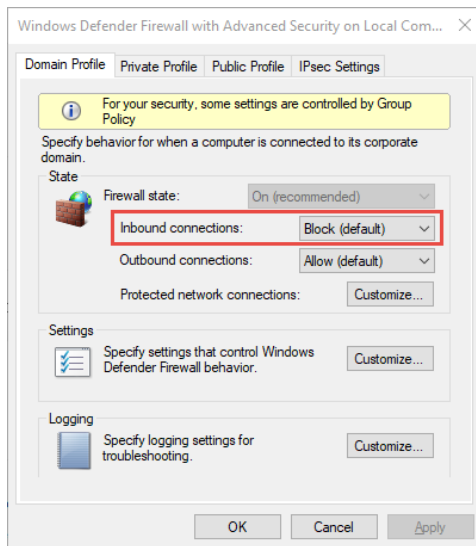

Keep All Software Up to Date

Updates can prevent security issues and improve compatibility and program features. Software updates are necessary to keep computers, mobile devices, and tablets running smoothly and they may lower vulnerabilities. Data breaches, hacks, cyber-attacks, and identity theft have all been in

the news. Make sure to turn on automatic updates in Windows Update to keep Windows, Microsoft Office, and other Microsoft applications up to date. Turn on automatic updates for non-Microsoft software as well, especially browsers, Adobe Acrobat Reader, and other apps you regularly use.
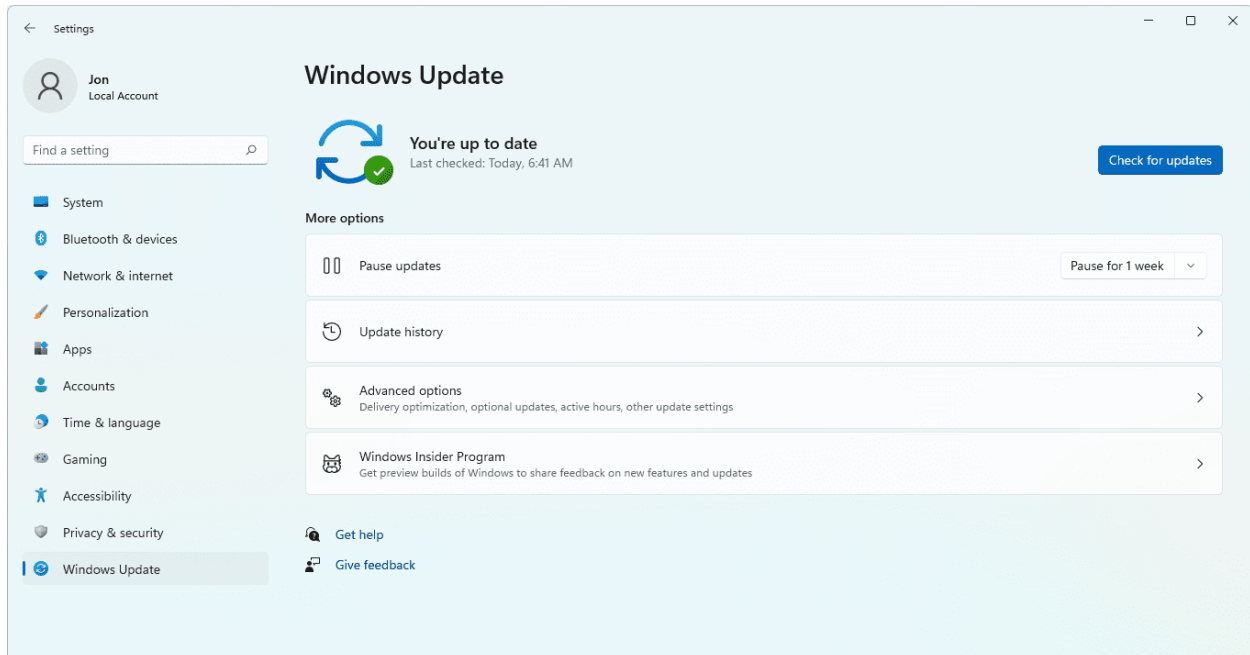
Use Antivirus Software and Keep It Current

Once it's on your computer or laptop, malware can steal your data, encrypt it so you can't access it or even erase it completely. For this reason, it's important that you always use antivirus software and keep it up to date to protect your data and devices. Always update software and apps as soon as possible because updates are released to fix weaknesses that might otherwise be exploited by cyber criminals. If you run Windows you have Windows Security or Windows Defender Security Center already installed on your device.
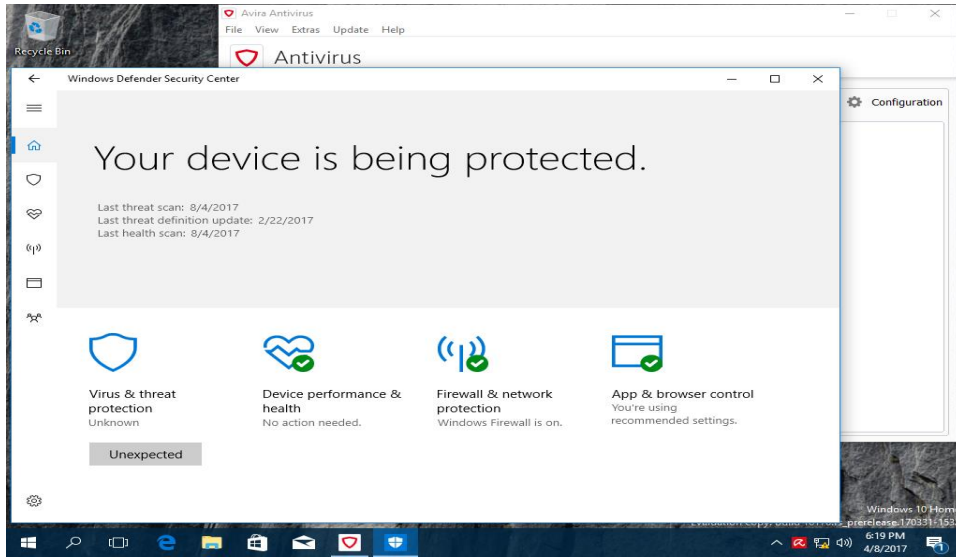
Make Sure Your Passwords Are Well-Chosen and Protected

One of the most important ways to ensure that your online accounts are safe and secure is to protect your passwords. Criminals can try to break your password, but sometimes it's easier to exploit human nature and trick you into revealing it. Microsoft Edge has a password monitor feature that can let you know if it spots that any of your passwords have been compromised in a data breach.

Here are some guidelines to follow to protect your passwords and other sensitive information:
- Be wary of anyone who is requesting sensitive information from you, even if it appears to be someone you know or a company you trust.
- Never share your password in response to an email or phone call.
- Always access websites using trusted links.
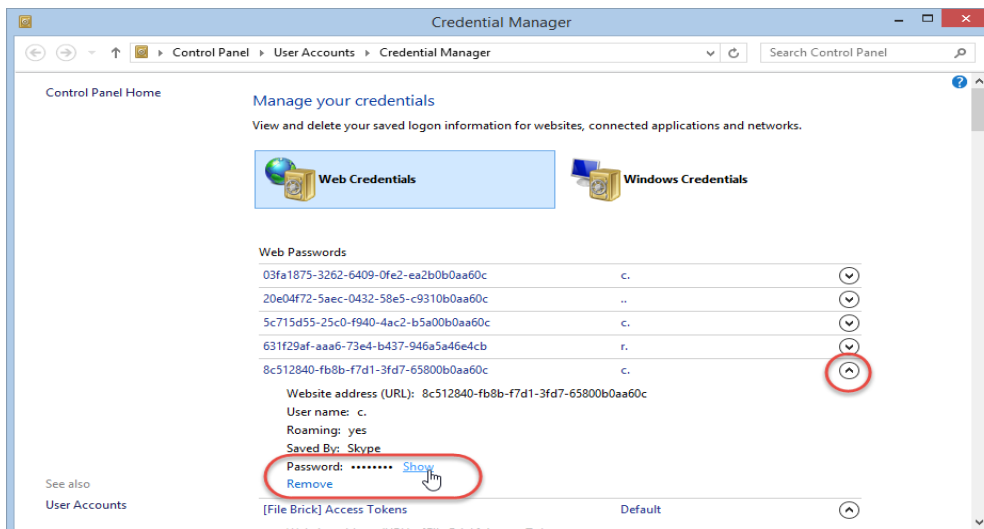
Stay Away from Pirated Materials

Everyone has dipped their toes into the pirated software world at least once in their life. The idea of getting free software appeals to a wide range of consumers who are usually uneducated about the dangers associated with them. Software that has been copied and distributed without permission is known as pirated software. Ransomware, Trojans, viruses, and other malicious software may wreak havoc on your computer and the data stored on it. Some pirated software products contain malicious malware that can access your data. This allows them to control your device and webcam.

Pirated Software Slows Down Progress

Using Purchased Software	Software Bugs and Issues are detected	Developers address bugs
Using Pirated Software	Software Bugs and Issues are not submitted	Developers cannot address bugs