

TECHNOLOGY & SAFETY PLANNING

Technology can be very helpful, especially if you are experiencing domestic violence. However, it is important to consider technology benefits and think how technology might be misused to further control or harm you. Trust your instincts. If you suspect that the abusive person knows too much, it is possible that your activities are being monitored since domestic violence is about power and control.

- A. **Use a safer computer.** If anyone abusive has access to my home computer, they can easily monitor ALL of my computer use and it is not possible to clear my trail. In fact, trying to clear the many histories on my computer could tip off my abuser to my plans. I will try to use a safer computer to look for help, find a new place to live, research legal options, etc. It may be safer for me to use a computer at a public library, community center, or Internet café.
- B. **Create a new email account.** It is common for abusive people to want to monitor and know their partners every move. It may be safest to create a new email account on a safer computer. I will not create or check this account from my home computer in case it is being monitored (www.hotmail.com or www.yahoo.com offer free email accounts). To increase my privacy I will choose a different email name (i.e.: purplechair@hotmail.com not myname@hotmail.com). I will not include any identifying information in my email address such as zip code, birth date, area code, city name, etc.
- C. **Change passwords & PIN's (personal identification numbers).** If anyone abusive knows or could guess my passwords, I may want to change them immediately and frequently. However, changing the password might cause him/her to become suspicious. Think about any accounts, online banking or services, etc. Some abusers have used victim's email accounts to impersonate their victims and cause harm.
- D. **Minimize use of cordless phones and/or baby monitors.** If I don't want neighbors to accidentally overhear or someone abusive to intentionally intercept my conversations, I will turn baby monitors off when not in use and use a traditional corded phone for sensitive conversations. If I put someone on hold and change from a cordless to a corded phone, I understand that my conversation can still be intercepted.
- E. **Use a donated or new cell phone.** If possible, I will not use a family or shared cell phone to make or receive any calls to arrange an escape plan since cell phone billing records or logs on the phone could reveal my plans. I will talk to my local domestic violence agency about cell phone donation programs such as the Verizon Wireless HopeLine program that provide new cell phones to victims or I will purchase a new cell phone with pre-paid minutes (and no billing records) that my abuser does not know about.
- F. **Check your cell phone settings.** If I am using a cell phone provided by the abusive person, it may be best to turn it off when I am not using it, or check the settings frequently. Many phones have a "lock" feature to lock the keys so the phone doesn't accidentally call someone if I bump it. If my family subscribes to a location service such as AT&T "Find Friends," I may want to turn off the location feature to increase my privacy; though doing so could cause my abuser to become suspicious of my activities.

- G. **Take precautions if you have a “Techy” abuser.** If computers and technology are a profession or a hobby for my abuser, I will trust my instincts if I think cameras or tracking systems are being used to monitor me.
- H. **Ask about your records & data.** Many court systems and government agencies are publishing records to the Internet. I will ask every agency I work with how they protect or publish my records and request that court/govt. systems to seal or restrict access to my files if necessary to protect my safety.
- I. **Get a private mailbox & don’t give out your real address.** When asked by businesses, doctors, and others for my address, I will have a private mailbox address or a safer address to give them to keep my true address out of the huge national databases and out of the hands of my abuser.
- J. **Search for your name on the Internet.** I will use a major search engine such as “Google” or “Yahoo” to look up my own name. (Put your name in quotes, “Jane Doe,” so that you don’t find others with the same first name). I will also check phone directory pages since even unlisted numbers might be listed.
- K. **Save all evidence of harassing or abusive instant messages, chat, email, voice mail etc.** Even if I am not sure I want to report the abuse to the police, I will keep a log of the events and also as much information about the abuser as possible. If I decide to report the events to the police in the future this information can help them investigate the crimes. It’s okay if I only know some of the information – any information may help police with my case. I will keep this information in a safe place (if you live with your abuser consider keeping your logs locked in your office or with a trusted friend or relative). See following tips.

Save All Instant Messages

To preserve evidence of harassing or abusive instant messages or chat, you need to **SAVE THEM**. Each instant messenger program is different, but below are instructions for AOL, Yahoo, and ICQ. Since there are multiple versions of even these 3 programs and many other programs, please check your “HELP” section of your instant messenger or chat program to find out how to save messages. If you are not sure how to do this correctly, contact your high-tech computer crime police unit.

Saving YAHOO Instant Messages:

1. To save a conversation to a text file, open the **File** menu at the top of the Instant Message window.
2. Choose **Save** from the menu.
3. Specify a name and location for the file.
4. Click **Save**.

Saving AOL Instant chat messages to a file:

1. With your chat messages still on your screen in the Chat Room window, select the **File** menu, and click **Save**. The Save Text File window opens.
2. Enter a name for the file in the **File** name field.

3. In the Save as type field, select **Text Only** if you want to save just the text of the messages. If you want to save the text and be able to follow any hyperlinks in the messages, select **AOL Rich Text Format**. This will create an HTML file you can view with your web browser.
4. Click **Save** to save the messages that appear in the upper pane of the Chat Room window.

Saving ICQ Instant Messages:

1. Click **Main**, then **Preferences & Security**.
2. To choose to save your history automatically, choose **Saving Options** (under Preferences). In the **Save Messages/History** pane, select the **Save History** checkbox.
3. Click **OK** to save your changes and close the window, or **Apply** to save your changes and keep the window open.
4. All of your incoming and outgoing ICQ Lite messages will now automatically be saved.

Saving MSN Messenger messages:

1. On the **File** menu in the Conversation window, click **Save** or **Save As**.
2. If prompted, type a name and the location of the file containing your conversation, then click **Save**.

Taking a Picture or Screen Shot of the Computer Screen

If you need to take electronic pictures of your computer screen to document high-tech stalking, harassment, or hacking, you can do it manually or purchase software to help you take screen shots or screen captures as it is called.

Windows Computers

Manual way to take screen shots:

1. Pressing the key “PrtScrn” or “PrintScreen” on your keyboard will take a screen shot of everything viewable on your computer monitor; all open programs it can see, it will capture.
2. Essentially, pressing this key “copies” the image. You need to open a program before you can “paste” it into another screen.
3. Once you have pressed “PrintScreen” you can open Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, or another program and then paste it into that program. To paste, go to the toolbar at the top of the program screen (in MS Word or PowerPoint, etc.) click on **Edit** then click on **Paste**.

Macintosh Computers

These are basic combinations of screen capture commands. Not all of these features may be available in all operating systems.

1. Press these keys at the same time:
Shift + Command + 3
2. This takes a screen capture of your entire screen and saves it to your desktop as a file named **Picture 1**.
3. Then you can open the image in another program or just click on the file saved to the desktop.

Some Screen Capture Software Applications

www.CaptureWiz.com
www.etrusoft.com
www.fullshot.com
www.screencapture.com
www.techsmith.com

***Some offer a trial version you can download for free.**

Save All Harassing Emails with their Header Information

To preserve evidence of harassing emails, you need to **SAVE ALL EMAILS**, including the email “header” (the stuff that sometimes shows up and is usually hidden from view. The email header contains a lot of valuable information about where the email was sent from and who wrote it. Each email program is different, however SpamCop has some good instructions for many email programs. If you go to the below web address you can read the instructions for your email program. If you are not sure how to do this correctly, contact your high-tech computer crime police unit. **DO NOT DELETE ANYTHING.**

<http://spamcop.net/fom-serve/cache/19.html>

AOL Tip

America Online has been known to delete email before you’re done with it. A way to get around this is to save the messages to your Personal Filing Cabinet.

1. Click Preferences, and choose Filing Cabinet.
2. Put a check in the box next to “Retain all mail I read in my Personal Filing Cabinet.”
3. Do the same for your sent mail.