

STOP. THINK. CONNECT.



Key Points

- The Internet is an extraordinary catalyst of innovation, education, and global economic growth, but it is threatened by ever more sophisticated malicious behavior and outright criminality.
- Everyone—consumers, parents, students, teachers, government, law enforcement, and business—has a role to play in helping to make the Internet a safer, more secure and trusted environment.
- Microsoft teamed with a broad coalition to launch STOP. THINK. CONNECT., a computing security and online safety campaign to raise awareness of Internet risks, and to promote strategies to help keep individuals and organizations safer online.

BACKGROUND

The Internet may be the landmark invention of this era. It offers new ways to work, communicate, learn, play, and grow. But, like the real world, the Internet comes with risk. Unfortunately, the digital age has enabled sophisticated new ways of causing harm—to people, their property, businesses, even nation-states. The vast benefits the Internet offers clearly outweigh the risks. But it is still important to help protect people and their valuables, and the best way to do this is to make them aware of potential pitfalls and to help them develop strategies for avoiding them.

Microsoft has invested in consumer awareness about safer use of its products and the Internet for decades, as have others in the industry. Over time, consumer attitudes and behaviors have changed—for the better. For instance, in the early 2000s, most home computer users had never even heard of “phishing,” even though the concept had then been around for about 15 years. (Phishing occurs when criminals try to trick unsuspecting consumers into giving away valuable personal information via fraudulent emails and phony web sites.)

Today, thanks to heightened public awareness, many consumers know to use caution when clicking links in email, and can recognize dubious email notifications that they’re “a winner,” or have been selected to receive “a gift” from someone they’ve never even met. Still, more work needs to be done. Phishing is just one type of online scam, and Microsoft and other companies and groups can only do so much individually.

In June 2009, the National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) and the Anti-Phishing Working Group (APWG) brought together a group of some 30 representatives from industry, business, and the nonprofit sector. Their goal: create a simple message that raises public awareness about online safety and security, which all participants could share and support.

Following a request from the U.S. president for a national public awareness campaign for computing safety and security, that effort led by the NCSA and APWG expanded to include the Department of Homeland Security and other government agencies and departments.

Launched at the Seattle kickoff of National Cyber Security Awareness Month in October 2010, STOP. THINK. CONNECT. (STC) stands as a prime example of public-private cooperation. It is an important step toward building a culture of online safety, similar to public awareness efforts aimed at encouraging seat-belt use and preventing forest fires. In 2012, STC expanded internationally, and is taking shape in Canada, among the Organization of American States, and among several European Union Member States. Europe will also formally recognize October as Cyber Security Month in 2014.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Microsoft encourages governments, both in the United States and internationally, to become involved in the STOP. THINK. CONNECT. coalition, and to promote and support the group's work.
- Microsoft believes cooperation among all stakeholders is the most effective means for reducing Internet threats, and it supports balanced regulation that leaves room for innovation and flexibility in responding to online risks.

MICROSOFT APPROACH

Microsoft takes a three-pronged approach to helping create safer, more trusted computing experiences.

- **Technology tools.** Microsoft offers a number of online safety tools, including Microsoft Security Essentials, a free antimalware program. Microsoft account holders can specify who can view their profiles, who can contact them, and who can post or view comments about their shared content on their Microsoft account. Microsoft Family Safety provides tools that help monitor and protect children online, and Xbox 360 comes equipped with Console Safety Settings.
- **Education and guidance.** The Microsoft Safety & Security Center provides guidance for safer Internet use, which includes tips on how consumers can secure their computers, protect their online reputations, avoid online scams, secure mobile devices, and avoid, block, and report inappropriate behavior.
- **Partnerships.** Creating a safer online environment requires a holistic approach in which consumers, government leaders, technology providers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) all play a vital role. Central to Microsoft's focus is engaging, through public policy, with governments around the world and with NGOs such as the National Cyber Security Alliance.



Helpful Resources

STOP. THINK. CONNECT. Online safety tips and advice
www.stopthinkconnect.org

Microsoft Safety & Security Center
www.microsoft.com/security

Microsoft's online safety updates on Facebook
www.facebook.com/SaferOnline

Microsoft's online safety presence on Twitter
twitter.com/Safer_Online