NYC Digital Safety
Privacy & Security

Data Breaches

Learn what to do if you are part of a data breach.

1. What Is A Data Breach?

A data breach is a security violation where sensitive, private, or personal information is copied or stolen by an unauthorized user.

Nefarious actors may obtain information to sell on the dark web or to run scams and phishing schemes. Here are some things that bad actors try to steal during a data breach:

- Passwords
- Emails
- Financial information
- Personal information like your social security number or address

Data breaches are increasingly common and can be hard to avoid. Do not feel bad if it happens to you! There are steps you can take to protect your data and deal with a data breach.

2. Shoring Up Against Data Breaches

Plan to protect your information ahead of time by assessing your personal data security. Online privacy best practices can be a good way to secure your information and avoid having it compromised. Use the space on the next two pages to note how you feel about the following areas and if there are areas for improvement.

Strength and uniqueness of your passwords:

Use of all available multi-factor authentication tools and techniques:

Use of a password manager (remember, there are free versions out there):

Routine account monitoring: do you routinely check services like haveibeenpwned.com to see if your information been compromised in a breach? Make a plan for how you might address this in the future:

Data minimization: are you sharing only what needs to be shared, online and in physical spaces like stores? Describe your approach to data here:

3. Have I Been Hacked?

Check the following to determine if you have been hacked

- Notification from the place that was hacked
- News stories (major hacks are often reported in major news sources)
- Suspicious account activity, like password reset emails you did not request
- Account appears when searching your accounts in https://haveibeenpwned.com/

4. Steps To Take If You've Been Hacked

In the immediate aftermath:

- Determine what information was stolen
- Change your password
- Close accounts as needed, particularly compromised credit card accounts
- Notify friends or contacts if your email or social media was hacked

Over time:

- Watch out for phishing schemes
- Implement stronger password hygiene
- Implement multi-factor authentication
- Pay attention to credit reports and your account activity

What else might you recommend?