



INTERNET SAFETY TIPS



Shopping Safety: If There's A Seal, It's A Deal

(NAPSA)—Shopping online is not only a good deal for shoppers and merchants—it can be a “steal” for thieves who thrive on credit card numbers or personal information.

Crooks can set up fake online stores, collect personal information, and disappear forever. Sites may display several endorsements—Visa and Mastercard logos for payment and the UPS logo for shipping—to suggest respectability but they don't guarantee it. Fortunately, several companies and nonprofit organizations such as TRUSTe offer seals that endorse a site's practices and history.

All of the major seals offer a link to the seal provider's site. If the retailer claims to have earned a seal and clicking on that seal doesn't bring up a page from the appropriate site, move on.

You should also confirm that a seal confirmation page is valid by checking the address bar. If you clicked on the TRUSTe seal and the site that pops up begins with anything other than <http://www.truste.org/>, it's a fake.

There are several kinds of seals, each with their own way of protecting you and your information. Reliability seals confirm the mailing address of the company, its telephone and e-mail address.

Security seals confirm that a company uses a secured path for personal data. A “lock” icon in the bottom of the Web browser and a “https://” in the address bar tells you criminals cannot intercept your data.

Vulnerability seals signify that the company issuing the seal regularly scans the site for common security vulnerabilities exploited by hackers. Large companies may



Checking a site for security seals can help protect your data from falling into the wrong hands.

conduct scans themselves and don't require an external company to do the job, so you may not see these seals on bigger Web sites.

Privacy seals signify that a company respectfully uses the information you provide. The most difficult to obtain, these seals require an extensive certification process that exposes how the company collects and uses information.

User rating seals offer a glimpse into what you can expect from a shopping experience. The ideal combination for worry-free shopping is a privacy seal and a positive consumer rating.

If you think a TRUSTe certified Web site has violated your privacy by sharing information without permission or sending unwanted email, you can file a complaint via the online dispute resolution service at <http://www.truste.org/watchdog>. If you encounter a suspicious Web site, you can check for known seal violators or request an investigation at http://www.truste.org/privacy_alert.