Being Cautious of the Dangers of the Internet

The easy and readily available Internet we have today exposes us to the wonders, as well as, the dangers of cyber space on a daily basis. As important as it is for us to be connected and explore this wondrous concept, we need to be aware of the conceivable dangers cyber space can hold. We need to firstly understand the online world in terms of the content available to us and possess the know-how of using it safely. Due to the Internet becoming more social, thanks to the uptake of social media platforms, a conscious awareness and knowledge is important for our social well-being.

Carolyn Holgate, part-time tech expert and full-time General Manager at MWEB’s consumer division – MWEB Connect – advices on the following online safety measures:

- **Shop smarter, not harder** – Shopping has become less painful and sharing in the shopping chores is a simple click of the mouse. As wonderful as online shopping is, look out for “https” before the website addresses – if it’s there it’s safe. The “s” stands for ‘Secure.’ “www.kalahari.net” is probably one of the most reliable online shopping sources and it has a great range of movies, books, music and electronic equipment.

- **Bank secure** – Never share your password or banking details with emails from your “bank” requesting you to do so- it is a scam, also known as phishing. Your bank has these confidential details and will never request it via email. If you’re unsure, rather be safe and call your bank manager to find out whether the email is legit than risk losing everything. As a rule, never click on a link in an email sent to you from your “bank”.

- **Personalise with caution** – Be very careful with who you share your personal details on the Internet. This includes credit card numbers, PIN numbers and even your residential address. Identity theft and fraud is rife and you don’t want to be a victim of such a criminal act. If you feel you are a target, you can contact the South African Fraud Prevention Service on 0860 101 248 for more information or register on the website www.safps.org.za to report an incident.

- **Safe dating** – If it seems too good to be true, it probably is. Chat rooms and online dating sites are great avenues to meet a potential partner but it can also host a bevy of con-artists. Again, always be conscious of who you share certain private information with. Holgate recommends www.40freeandsingle.co.za for the more mature singles out there. MWEB
Dating [http://mweb.datingbuzz.com/s/](http://mweb.datingbuzz.com/s/) also provides a secure, hassle-free environment where people can meet to form new online relationships. It is also quick, easy, safe and completely anonymous and has brought many smiles to singles in the past.

- **The network of social networking** – Today there is a wealth of online networking sites and, although thought of as the world of the youth, a big portion of social networkers are between 35 and 50 years of age. According to a Friendship 2.0 survey conducted by MWEB in 2010 among local web users, the myth that social networking is only done by youngsters was broken; demonstrating how social networking has gone mainstream. It showed that on average, adult social networkers in South Africa are in their 30’s or older, employed full-time, and describe themselves as sociable and outgoing.

- **Secure your bits** – It is always advisable to have a good and reliable antivirus programme to safeguard you against the dangers of the Internet. AVG internet security is an example of a cost-effective Internet security package. Get it from MWEB at a mere R15p/m.

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