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## *Avoid being an identity theft victim with these 10 things*

**Identity theft** Involves the illegal usage of another individual's identity, credentials and other personal information. These items could include their name, address, social security number, driver's license number, credit card and bank account numbers, etc. Identity theft is one of the fastest-growing crimes in today's connected world. The most common form of identity theft being credit card fraud. Even though that identity theft, relatively new, the practice of stealing money or getting other benefits by pretending to be another person is as old as time.

Statistics from the Federal Trade Commission's January 2006 report show that the organization received more than 685,000 complaints of consumer fraud last year, with 36 percent representing cases of ID theft. Estimates of the true number of cases is much higher; [fightidentitytheft.com](http://fightidentitytheft.com) estimates that 10 million Americans have already been victimized, at a total cost of more than \$50 billion.

There are things you can do to avoid becoming one of these statistics, and ways to minimize the damage if you do become the target of an ID thief.

1. Shop only secure sites
2. Protect your personal information
3. Protect PINs and passwords
4. Protect sensitive data on your computer
5. Use an alternate identity for casual Web surfing
6. Learn to recognize phishing scams
7. Use cash or credit
8. Get off the lists
9. Check your credit report
10. Report identity theft attempts

More information can be found at:

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/consumers/about-identity-theft.html>

<http://www.fightidentitytheft.com/>

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