

YOUR MONEY

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Using credit cards securely online.



Nowadays, shopping online is a very common thing. Making your purchases

without leaving your house is an attractive option for many of us. Purchasing items over the internet using your credit card can be quite an unpleasant experience if you don't make sure your payments are safe. Although many people consider that using a credit card for online transactions is not safe, they continue using this method but with increased caution measures. The greatest risk we expose ourselves to when shopping online is identity theft. But this is not the only risk, and various studies reveal that people have also other concerns like: personal information will be sold to third parties, unauthorized recurring transactions, not receiving the ordered products or even higher prices than advertised prices.

Many people think that shopping online is risky, but the risk is not greater than others. Taking few precaution measures is the best thing to do unless you want to quite shopping online.

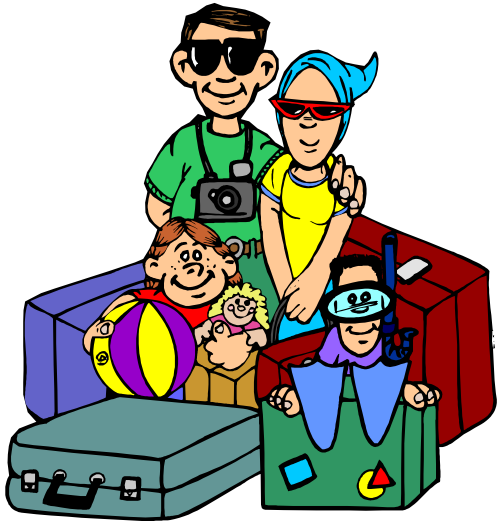
First of all, we should not shop from unknown websites. Always look for the companies you know or ask someone to recommend you a site or a company that he/she uses. Still, if you're not sure of the vendor's identity try to find his address and phone number and check them. Also check the refund and return policies of the company in case they don't ship you the right products or you're not satisfied with their quality.

Another thing to be careful about is the browser that you're using, it has to be a secured browser. A secured browser should include Secure Sockets Layer that scramble the information you are sending over the internet, making the transaction more secure. You can easily recognize a secured web site, because when you're filling in online orders or applications a closed padlock sign should appear at the bottom of the screen. Another way to make sure that the web site is secure is to check the URL; if it begins with "https" it means the transaction is secure because the "s" stands for secure.

Another important thing to be careful about is your privacy. The information you're submitting when you use your credit card online should be kept private by the company that receives it, meaning it should not be passed on or sold to third parties unless you agree. Most web sites ask for your permission to use personal details for direct marketing, and if you feel uncomfortable giving them permission you must know you have the right to object. Anyway, before submitting any personal details you should check the privacy policy of an website; if there are things not clear to you give them a call and see if your understanding is correct or not. Do not submit any information, unless you're absolutely sure that your credit card details are safe.

Being able to safely use credit cards for online purchases is not only the buyer's responsibility. The vendor has also his part of responsibility in ensuring safe purchases for his clients. Vendors also suffer from credit card frauds. They have to take some security measures in order for them and their customers to be protected against online credit card frauds. Security and privacy are two important aspects a vendor should take into consideration. He must ensure the client that the personal information submitted are kept private and at the same time he must check the details received to make sure that he's dealing with the real cardholder.

It is a well known fact that online credit card transactions are risky, because your personal information are exposed and can be stolen by others with the intention of using them to commit frauds. Yet, if the buyers are careful to whom they relies these information and the vendors are cautious from whom they receive credit card information, the risks of online credit card frauds decreases significantly. When disclosing personal information, common sense should exist.



Keeping Credit Card Bills to a Minimum During Vacations

Nowadays, everybody has at least one credit card. It is true that credit cards are a real necessity and we cannot do without them. But it is also true that an increasing number of people have more and more debts accumulated on their credit cards. This is a worrying situation as an increasing number of persons are beginning to have troubles repaying their credit card debts or keeping to a minimum the credit line limit. Usually, credit cards are to be used in emergency situations and not whenever going shopping. The credit line offered by the credit card company should be used wisely and not charging every shopping bill on it, as you might get into the situation

where you discovered you have spent too much and now have trouble paying back.

Keeping credit card bills to a minimum should be one of your top priority goals not only because it is possible to be unable at some point to pay them back but also because with large credit card debts you'll jeopardize your chances of getting a mortgage or loan. So, keeping credit cards bills to a minimum is not a measure that will help you only at the present time but also in the future.

Usually, the largest credit card bills are registered during vacations. People tend to be not so restrictive about charging on their credit cards during vacations because usually they only think of having fun and relaxing. When returning home from the vacation they will have to face all their high credit card bills.

So, if you don't want to be pilled under debts try keeping credit card bills to a minimum during vacations. Of, course you'll have to make some efforts but the struggle will not be in vain.

Your efforts should start long before your vacation starts:

Make your vacation preparations in time and don't let anything for the last minute. Last minute arrangements are usually more expensive and moreover for some issues you'll have to ask for the help of a specialized agency that will charge you a fee for sure.

Think in advance all your moves and what you need for your holiday and buy or prepare them from before and you'll end up saving some money.

The next step would be to plan ahead all your expenses; consider making a fixed budget for your holiday and don't forget the little extras that most people overlook when drafting a budget. The extras should include everything you can think of from posting a card to cost of boarding a pet when you're traveling. Decide before going on your holiday how much you can spend and don't go over the agreed sum because it will be harder for you to pay it back.

Another thing to think of when you try keeping credit card bills to a minimum is to make a list with all your planned expenses for the holiday and respect that list. Make the list for the gifts you are going to buy for your friends and relatives. Put into the list also the amounts you are going to spend for each person. If the total amount is too much check the list again and cut off some names or decrease amounts. Don't think of what you're going to buy to each person, just set the amount to be spent and don't go over it. In order to be sure you will not overspend, it is best to take out from your account the amount that you're planning to use for buying gifts and when this amount is finished just stop buying. To keep expenses to a minimum try sending e-cards instead of normal cards; they are free, don't require postage and you can be sure they will arrive in time.

Keeping credit card bills to a minimum is a requirement for all the expenses connected to your holiday. So, if you're spending your holidays abroad think of how much you are going to pay just for using your credit card outside the country. Usually, credit card companies have higher than usual fees for using the credit card abroad. To avoid these high fees take out the cash from your account and pay cash for everything. This is also a good way to keep your expenses in the budget because you'll see more clearly how much money you still have to spend and your credit card bills will not be overcharged.