

Cybercrime and fraud are serious threats and constant vigilance is key. While Capital Advisors plays an important role in helping protect your assets, you can also take action to protect yourself and help secure your information. This checklist summarizes common cyber fraud tactics, along with tips and best practices. Many suggestions may be things you are doing now, while others may be new. We also cover actions to take if you suspect that your personal information has been compromised. If you have questions, we are here to help.

Cyber criminals exploit our increasing reliance on technology. Methods used to compromise a victim's identity or login credentials – such as malware, phishing, and social engineering – are increasingly sophisticated and difficult to spot. A fraudster's goal is to obtain information to gain access to your account / assets or sell your information. Fortunately, criminals often take the path of least resistance. Following best practices and applying caution when sharing information or executing transactions makes a big difference.

1. Safe practices for communicating with our firm:

- **Keep us informed** regarding changes to your personal information.
- **Expect us to call you** to confirm email requests to move money, trade, or change account information.
- **Establish a verbal password** with our firm to confirm your identity or request a video chat.

2. Follow general best practices:

- **Be suspicious** of unexpected or unsolicited phone calls, emails, and texts asking you to send money or disclose personal information. If you receive a suspicious call, do not accept it, hang up, and call back using a known contact number.
- **Be cautious when sharing sensitive information** and conducting personal or confidential business via email, since it can be compromised and used to facilitate identity theft.
- **Do not disclose personal or sensitive information on social media sites**, such as your birthdate, contact information, and mother's maiden name.
- **Be cautious when receiving money movement instructions via email.** Call the sender at their known number (not a number provided in the email) to validate all instruction details verbally before following instructions or providing your approval.
- Protect yourself from phishing attempts and malicious links (see glossary for additional information).
- Check your email and account statements regularly for suspicious activity.
- **Do not verbally disclose or enter confidential information** on a laptop or mobile device in public areas where someone could potentially see, hear, or access your information.

- **Verify payment requests you receive by phone or email.** Requests for you to make payments using prepaid debit cards, gift cards, or digital currency are frequently associated with fraud or scams.

3. Keep your technology up to date.

- **Keep your web browser and operating system up to date** and be sure you are using appropriate security settings. Old software, operating systems, and browsers can be susceptible to attack.
- **Install anti-virus and anti-spyware software** on all computers and mobile devices.
- **Enable the security settings** on your applications and web browser.
- **Do not use free or found USB thumb drives**—they could be infected with viruses or malware.
- **Turn off Bluetooth** when it is not needed, to protect against individuals gaining access to your devices using Bluetooth connections.
- **Safely and securely dispose of old hardware.**

4. Be cautious with public networks.

- **Avoid using public computers.** If you must use one, go to the browser settings and clear the browser history (cache) and cookies when you are finished.
- **Only use wireless networks you trust** or that are protected with a secure password.
- **Use your personal Wi-Fi hotspot** instead of public Wi-Fi.
- **Do not accept software updates** if you are connected to public Wi-Fi.

5. Be strategic with your login credentials and passwords.

- **Do not use personal information** such as your Social Security number or birthday as part of your login ID.
- **Create a unique password** for each financial institution you do business that are long and contain a combination of characters, numbers, and symbols. Consider using a password manager to create, manage, and store passwords that are unique and secure.
- **Do not share your passwords.**
- **Use two-step verification whenever possible.**

6. Be sure you are on a secure website.

- **Check the URL to see if it is a secure connection.** Secure sites begin with https rather than http and are generally considered safer.
- **Download apps only from the Google Play™ Store or the Apple App Store®.**
- **Do not visit websites you do not know**—for example, websites advertised on pop-up ads and banners.
- **Log out completely** to terminate access when you have completed a secure session, such as with online banking or a credit card payment.

7. Beware of phishing.

- **Do not click on links or attachments** in emails and text messages if you question the validity of the sender. Instead, type the real web address, for example <https://www.capitaladv.com>, in your browser.
- **Hover over questionable links** to reveal the site's full URL and see where the link really goes. Do not click on links that do not match the sender or do not match what you expect to see.
- **Be suspicious** of emails that have grayed-out Cc: and To: lines—they may have been sent to a mass distribution list.
- **Check the sender's domain name in the email address** (john.doe@capitaladv.com) to see if it matches what you would expect to see.
- **Activate the spam filters** in your email settings tab. This will help prevent unsolicited emails from coming to your inbox.
- **If you have questions about an email from Capital Advisors** or personal information you entered about your custodian account after clicking an email link, call your advisor or your custodian immediately.

8. What to do if you suspect a breach

- Call our office and / or your custodian immediately so that they can watch for suspicious activity, and we will collaborate with you and your custodian on other steps to take.

Glossary

Two-step verification (aka multi-factor authentication)

A method of confirming your identity using a second step to verify who you are. For example, the first step might be to enter your username and password, and the second step might be to enter a randomly generated number sent to you via email, text, phone call, or token.

Phishing

The fraudulent practice of sending emails or text messages appearing to be from reputable companies or trusted individuals in an attempt to get individuals to reveal personal information such as passwords and credit card numbers. Phishing attempts are usually urgent-sounding, legitimate looking emails or texts designed to trick you into disclosing personal information or installing a virus on your device. These scams can be sent as attachments or links that, when opened or clicked, may trigger malicious activity, or take you to fake sites that resemble the real business websites.

Password manager

An encrypted online or cloud-based program that generates, retrieves, and keeps track of random passwords across countless accounts and also protects information such as passwords, PINs, credit card numbers and their three-digit CVV codes, and answers to security questions.

Domain name

As it relates to an email address, this is the information that comes after the @ symbol—for example, capitaladv.com in jane.doe@capitaladv.com.

Spam filter

A program that detects unsolicited and unwanted emails and prevents them from reaching your email inbox. Usually, these types of emails are instead sent to a spam folder.

Malware

Software that is intended to damage or disable computers and computer systems.

Learn more:

- Visit these sites for more information and best practices:
- [StaySafeOnline.org](https://www.staysafeonline.org/): Review the STOP. THINK. CONNECT™ cybersecurity educational campaign.
- [OnGuardOnline.gov](https://www.onguardonline.gov/): Focused on online security for kids, it includes a blog on current cyber trends.
- FDIC Consumer Assistance & Information, <https://www.fdic.gov/consumers/assistance/index.html>.
- FBI Scams and Safety provides additional tips, <https://www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety>.

Disclosure:

This commentary does not purport to be a statement of all material facts relating to the subject matter covered and does not represent an official opinion of Capital Advisors, Inc. The information contained herein, while not guaranteed as to accuracy or completeness, has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable. It is provided with the understanding that Capital Advisors, Inc. is not engaged in offering legal, accounting or insurance services. If such advice or expert assistance is required, the services of a competent, professional person should be sought.

Capital Advisors makes no representations, warranties, or guarantees as to, and assumes no responsibility for the content or application of the material contained herein.

Presentation is prepared by: Capital Advisors, Inc. Copyright © 2021, by Capital Advisors, Inc.

20210617WA