



Tip Sheet

Using the internet on behalf of others

Do you sometimes act as a 'proxy internet user' – where you use online services and applications on behalf of someone else who otherwise makes limited use of the internet? Proxy internet assistance often takes place within families – notably elderly parents being helped by their adult children. Other proxy users include people acting in a professional capacity – for example carers, social workers and other public-facing professionals who assist clients with specific online tasks.

If you are using the internet for someone else then here are some tips for effective and safe support

If possible, try to make using the internet a learning experience

- Try to teach the person that you are helping, rather than simply doing things for them. It can be very frustrating to help someone who is not familiar with the internet. However, people will gain skills and understanding by seeing what you are doing, so try to include them in everything that you do.

Issues of transparency are very important

- Keep clear and complete records of what you are doing – e.g. what websites you used, what you did, when you did it. If you are making purchases or dealing with finances then send a follow-up email that summarises the dates and amounts of each transaction.
- Make sure that someone else knows the procedures and routines that you have set up. If possible, try to involve other people in helping. This can reduce the work involved, and make sure that someone else can step in if you are unavailable or need a break.
- If you find yourself doing this as part of your job, then make sure that your managers or employer are aware of what you are doing. Get clarification of what your job description allows you to do, and what you are not to do. Get clarification of how you are protected in the event of something going wrong.
- Be sure to continually discuss what you are doing with the person and never step beyond what the person has consented for you to do.

Issues of security are very important

- When logging into an account get the person you are helping to type their own password.
- Where possible, try to do things through your own accounts, rather than using the other person's accounts and 'impersonating' them. Some service providers, including banks, can set up your account so that it acts as an authorised user for another account.
- Otherwise, keep details of the other person's login details secure – and make sure that you use different passwords from your own.

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Issues of informed consent are very important

- Make sure that you and the person you are helping are clear on the legal issues, privacy issues and consumer rights in what you are doing. For example, you are both likely to be liable for any transgressions such as illegally downloading copyrighted material.

Some good sources of information

- How to work with older adults – [Seniors Rights](#)
- Tips on supporting someone to begin using the internet – [BBC Webwise](#)
- Where to direct someone for basic internet training and support – your local library, [Seniors Computer Clubs](#), [Go Digi](#)
- How to act as a nominee for the delivery of government services – [Department of Human Services](#)
- Tips on staying safe online – [Stay Smart Online](#)