

Tech Tips: Don't click around!

The last Tech Tip was that we should know what domain we are in before deciding whether to click a button or link on a web page. This is the most important way we can protect ourselves from hackers, and it applies to more than just web sites. We see links and buttons in all kinds of places – web pages, documents, Emails, spreadsheets, games, and more. We become accustomed to them and sometimes click them without thinking. *Don't click unless you trust the source.* This is because clicking a link sends a request to the cloud. Once you make a request, your firewall opens itself up to receive the response – whether it's good or bad.

Controls can look fun, funky, or friendly. If we click, will it take us to a friendly site or a hacker site? There's no way to know ahead of time. This link: [Citibank](#) takes you to our neighborhood website. (Click it, if you don't believe me.) This link: <http://microsoft.com> does too. Every link has two properties: the URL (web address) and the text that is displayed. If you know how to see the link's properties, you might see something like this:



Even if we know how to see the link's properties, it is still possible for a hacker to fool us. Computers can work in many different languages, such as Japanese. Japanese has many kanji characters. If a computer is set to work in Japanese, it will display the kanji character when it is in the URL. But if a computer is set to work in English, it doesn't recognize some kanji characters and can display nothing. We don't see the kanji character, but it is still in the URL. The URL can look perfectly OK, and still send us to a hacker's site.

Remember:

- Don't click a link or control unless you trust the source.
- Hackers are sometimes smarter than we are.
- Computers are passive-aggressive. They do what we say, even if it's an obviously bad idea.
- We never have to click the link.

For example, say I receive an Email from a friend. The writing style is what I expect from this friend, and it has a link that looks interesting. I'll click the link because I trust the source. If I receive an Email from my bank that says there is a serious problem with my account, I will not click the link. This might be a clever scam from a hacker trying to get my password. Instead, I will log into my bank as I usually do and see if the website confirms the problem. If I don't see a problem but want to make sure, I'll call the bank.

The number one rule for computer security is this:

Don't click unless you trust the source. We will get ***something***, but it might not be what we want.

If you have tech tip questions, send them to me at deichenlaub@gmail.com. Tech tips are on our website. Go to snowdenoverlook.com. Click Admin / Tech Tips.