

Section 4—Consumer Issues and Education

Title of Lesson/Subject: *Identity Theft 11*

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Time Allotment: One Class Period

Grade Level or Target Audience: Grades 9-12

ND Standards Competencies:

Consumer & Family Resources –

- 2.3.1 Define consumer rights and responsibilities
- 2.3.2 Examine state and federal policies and laws providing consumer protection
- 2.3.3 Demonstrate skills used in seeking information related to consumer rights
- 2.5.3 Identify personal and legal documents related to managing individual and family finances

English Language Arts

- 12.3.1 Write business or other formal documents, including resumes, scholarship letters, and letter of inquiry or complaint

Key Economic Concepts:

- Preventing Identity Theft
- Recovering from Identity Theft

Brief Description:

In this lesson, students will learn how to prevent becoming a victim of identity theft and the steps to take if it occurs.

Learner Objectives:

- Students will understand the impact of identity theft
- Students will know how to protect their identities
- Students will understand their rights which are designed to help them recover from identity theft
- Students will know the steps to take if they become a victim of identity theft

Introduction:

Tell students that today's lesson will focus on one of the fastest growing problems for consumers – identity theft. Have students take the “Identity Theft” [Online Quiz](#) to test their pre-knowledge on identity theft.

Materials Needed:

- Computer for each student with Internet access
- [How Can I Minimize My Risk](#) handout (attached)
- [Fair Credit Reporting Act Rights](http://www.consumer.gov) handout (www.consumer.gov)
- [Identity Theft: Reduce Your Risk](#) brochure (by American Express)
- [Identity Theft Assessment](#) worksheet (attached)

Audio/Visual Equipment Needed: Whiteboard or projector

Lesson Outline:

1. Discuss the impact of identity theft on individuals and on society.
2. Discuss how you can minimize your risk of identity theft.
3. Discuss your rights that will help you to recover from identity theft.
4. Discuss the steps necessary to take if you find that you have become a victim of identity theft.

Resources: [Take Charge: Fighting Back against Identity Theft](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/idtheft.pdf)
 (<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/idtheft.pdf>)
 Identity Theft [Online Quiz](http://onguardonline.gov/quiz/idtheft_quiz.html)
 (http://onguardonline.gov/quiz/idtheft_quiz.html)
[Facts and Statistics](http://www.idtheftcenter.org/facts.shtml)
 (<http://www.idtheftcenter.org/facts.shtml>)
[Minimize Your Risk](#) (attached)
 (http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/con_minimize.htm#minimize)
[Fair Credit Reporting Act Rights](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/idtsummary.pdf)
 (<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/idtsummary.pdf>)

Activities:

- Have students go to the Identity Theft [Facts and Statistics](http://www.idtheftcenter.org/facts.shtml) website and discuss these items with the group. Discuss with students the impact that technology has had on this problem as well as the ease of getting credit in today's world.
- Distribute the [How Can I Minimize My Risk](#) handout and read through and discuss with the group (attached).
- Distribute the [Fair Credit Reporting Act Rights](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/idtsummary.pdf) handout and discuss each of these with the group.
- Distribute the [Identity Theft: Reduce Your Risk](#) brochure. Direct students attention to the section titled "If You're a Victim" and discuss the steps necessary to recover from identity theft.
- The document [Take Charge: Fighting Against Identity Theft](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/idtheft.pdf) has more detailed information that can be shared with students regarding what steps to take if you become a victim of identity theft.

Application/Assignment: Assign students to complete the [Identity Theft Assessment](#) worksheet (attached).

Evaluation Plan: Students will be evaluated on their participation in the class discussions and activities. They will also be evaluated on the worksheet.

How Can I Minimize My Risk of Identity Theft?

When it comes to identity theft, you can't entirely control whether you will become a victim. But there are certain steps you can take to minimize your risk.

Order a copy of your credit report. An amendment to the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act requires each of the major nationwide consumer reporting companies to provide you with a free copy of your credit reports, at your request, once every 12 months.

To order your free annual report from one or all the national consumer reporting companies, visit www.annualcreditreport.com, call toll-free 877-322-8228, or complete the Annual Credit Report Request Form and mail it to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281. You can print the form from ftc.gov/credit. Do not contact the three nationwide consumer reporting companies individually; they provide free annual credit reports only through www.annualcreditreport.com, 877-322-8228, and Annual Credit Report Request Service, P.O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281.

Under federal law, you're also entitled to a free report if a company takes adverse action against you, such as denying your application for credit, insurance or employment, and you request your report within 60 days of receiving notice of the action. The notice will give you the name, address, and phone number of the consumer reporting company that supplied the information about you. You're also entitled to one free report a year if you're unemployed and plan to look for a job within 60 days; you're on welfare; or your report is inaccurate because of fraud. Otherwise, a consumer reporting company may charge you up to \$9.50 for any other copies of your report.

To buy a copy of your report, contact:

Equifax: 800-685-1111; www.equifax.com

Experian: 888-EXPERIAN (888-397-3742); www.experian.com

TransUnion: 800-916-8800; www.transunion.com

Under state law, consumers in Colorado, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Vermont already have free access to their credit reports.

If you ask, only the last four digits of your Social Security number will appear on your credit reports.

Place passwords on your credit card, bank, and phone accounts. Avoid using easily available information like your mother's maiden name, your birth date, the last four digits of your Social Security number or your phone number, or a series of consecutive numbers. When opening new accounts, you may find that many businesses still have a line on their applications for your mother's maiden name. Ask if you can use a password instead.

Secure personal information in your home, especially if you have roommates, employ outside help, or are having work done in your home.

Ask about information security procedures in your workplace or at businesses, doctor's offices or other institutions that collect your personally identifying information. Find out who has access to your personal information and verify that it is handled securely. Ask about the disposal procedures for those records as well. Find out if your information will be shared with anyone else. If so, ask how your information can be kept confidential.

Don't give out personal information on the phone, through the mail, or on the Internet unless you've initiated the contact or are sure you know who you're dealing with. Identity thieves are clever, and have posed as representatives of banks, Internet service providers (ISPs), and even government agencies to get people to reveal their Social Security number, mother's maiden name, account numbers, and other identifying information. Before you share any personal information, confirm that you are dealing with a legitimate

organization. Check an organization's website by typing its URL in the address line, rather than cutting and pasting it. Many companies post scam alerts when their name is used improperly. Or call customer service using the number listed on your account statement or in the telephone book. For more information, see [How Not to Get Hooked by a 'Phishing' Scam](#).

Treat your mail and trash carefully.

Deposit your outgoing mail in post office collection boxes or at your local post office, rather than in an unsecured mailbox. Promptly remove mail from your mailbox. If you're planning to be away from home and can't pick up your mail, call the U.S. Postal Service at 1-800-275-8777 to request a vacation hold. The Postal Service will hold your mail at your local post office until you can pick it up or are home to receive it.

To thwart an identity thief who may pick through your trash or recycling bins to capture your personal information, tear or shred your charge receipts, copies of credit applications, insurance forms, physician statements, checks and bank statements, expired charge cards that you're discarding, and credit offers you get in the mail. To opt out of receiving offers of credit in the mail, call: 1-888-5-OPTOUT (1-888-567-8688). The three nationwide consumer reporting companies use the same toll-free number to let consumers choose not to receive credit offers based on their lists. **Note:** You will be asked to provide your Social Security number which the consumer reporting companies need to match you with your file.

Don't carry your Social Security number card; leave it in a secure place.

Give your Social Security number only when absolutely necessary, and ask to use other types of identifiers. If your state uses your Social Security number as your driver's license number, ask to substitute another number. Do the same if your health insurance company uses your Social Security number as your policy number.

Carry only the identification information and the credit and debit cards that you'll actually need when you go out.

Be cautious when responding to promotions. Identity thieves may create phony promotional offers to get you to give them your personal information.

Keep your purse or wallet in a safe place at work; do the same with copies of administrative forms that have your sensitive personal information.

When ordering new checks, pick them up from the bank instead of having them mailed to your home mailbox.

Source: http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/con_minimize.htm#minimize

Identity Theft Assessment

Name _____

True or False.

- _____ 1. You are entitled to one free credit report every 12 months.
- _____ 2. If you ask, a debt collector must provide you with information about the debt you believe was incurred in your name by an identity thief.
- _____ 3. You cannot do anything about information in your consumer reporting agency file that you believe results from identity theft.
- _____ 4. To obtain documents relating to fraudulent transactions made or accounts opened using your personal information, you must ask for them in writing.
- _____ 5. There are four major credit bureaus which can provide you with a copy of your credit report.

6. List 4 things you can do to reduce your risk of becoming a victim of identity theft.

7. List the steps you should take if you do become a victim of identity theft.

8. What is the difference between an initial fraud alert and an extended fraud alert?