

Keep the Holiday Cheer In, Lock the Hackers Out



The festive season is all about connection with smart devices and gifts that make life easier, but every connected gift also opens a digital doorway into your home.

Internet of Things (IoT) devices can expose personal data, give outsiders access to cameras or microphones, or turn into bots for cyberattacks, so make sure the security settings are configured properly before you unwrap the fun.

What is a “smart” device?

If it connects to Wi-Fi or an app, it’s part of IoT. Common examples include:

-  **Smart speakers and displays**
-  **Fitness trackers and smartwatches**
-  **Connected toys and pet cameras**
-  **Smart TVs and doorbells**
-  **Lighting systems and thermostats**

These devices collect data and talk to other devices, sometimes more than you realise. When a new IoT device is set up with its default settings, it is wide open to enterprising cybercriminals. Weak passwords can be guessed or found online, unpatched software leaves holes for hackers to exploit, default sharing permissions might leak data about your home, habits, or location, and compromised devices can be used in larger cyberattacks without you even knowing.

A few minutes of setup can prevent hours of stress later.

Give yourself the gift of cyber safety

Keep your new smart devices safe with these quick security steps:

-  **Passwords**
Change default passwords right away and remember to make them strong and unique.
-  **Update**
Update the device firmware to make sure it is not an easy target for cybercrime
-  **Privacy**
Adjust privacy settings to limit what data gets collected or shared.
-  **Two-factor authentication**
Use two-factor authentication when the device or app offers it.
-  **Networks**
Segment your network and keep smart devices on a guest or separate Wi-Fi if possible.
-  **Disable unnecessary features**
Disable unnecessary features, so if you’re not using voice control or remote access, turn it off.

Before the wrapping paper hits the floor, take a few minutes to lock down your new tech. A little effort now keeps your festive season, family, finances and reputation safe.