

# PLUMAS COUNTY TECH TIPS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TECHNOLOGY TODAY



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# Tidy Up Your Tech: A Spring-Cleaning Guide

Spring is here, and it's a good time to think about cleaning—and not just your home or closet. Your personal computing devices could use some organization and a refresh too. Doing so will lead to a better, more secure experience for you on your smartphone, tablet, or computer. Check out the tips below to learn more about how to clean and organize your devices and the information they store.

**Manage Passwords:** By now, you know that using strong and sufficiently complex passwords are a key element of staying safe online. Consider using a password manager to not only help you keep track of your accounts but also to be notified if your credentials are potentially compromised. Most smartphones (iOS, Android) have a built-in password manager, as do several web browsers. Paid password managers such as Bitwarden or 1Password offer additional feature sets beyond built-in default options. Password management is a basic form of cyber hygiene that can enhance your security and give you peace of mind.

**Cancel Email subscription lists:** Remember those unopened emails that clued you into the accounts you no longer use? Don't forget to unsubscribe from those companies' email lists as well. Opting out of all the email mailing lists that no longer serve or interest you is a great way to reclaim digital storage space and also ease the load of managing email folders in the future. Simply scroll to the bottom of those unwanted subscription emails to find the "unsubscribe" button and manage your engagement to fit your preferences.

**Archive or delete old emails:** Review your email account(s) and scrub your inbox folders clean of messages you don't need. Don't stop there. Be sure to empty the trash folder and archive any emails in your inbox that you don't currently need but want to store for future access. While you're in organizing mode, evaluate your email folders and filters and decide whether they are sorting messages in a way that is helpful or if you need to update your system a bit.

**Delete or cancel unused accounts:** You might be surprised how many online accounts you have that you don't use – some may even be paid subscriptions. Take time to review your online accounts. (Hint: all those unopened emails lurking in your inbox might point to where to find the accounts.) Close any that you no longer need or use. Reduce the number of places and ways you may be at risk by reducing your unnecessary account clutter. Think of it as clearing out a junk drawer of gadgets you forgot you had. Make sure to use unique and secure passwords for each account.

**Social Media:** It is a good idea to periodically review your security settings and connections.

**Devices:** Smartphones, tablets, laptops and computers make our lives so much easier. Consider removing unused apps and clear out any downloads you aren't using anymore. Make sure your device requires a password, pin, or fingerprint to log in.

**Web Browser Settings:** Many browsers can store your passwords or autofill settings. Take a few minutes to check your browser settings, clear out old data, and ensure your browser's security settings are still keeping you safe.

**Physically clean your devices:** Be sure to keep your phone and computer clean—they definitely encounter and collect a lot of germs and dirt. But don't use whatever household cleaning supplies you might have handy, as they may damage your devices. Use gentle wipes without harsh chemicals, and never spray liquid directly onto your devices. Make sure to clean your headphones or earbuds gently using a soft cloth. You can also purchase cleaning kits specifically recommended for the headphones you have (AirPods, for example).

## Emotional Triggers - How Cyber Attackers Trick You

Cyber attackers are constantly innovating ways to trick us into doing things we should not do, like clicking on malicious links, opening infected email attachments, purchasing gift cards or giving up our passwords. In addition, they often use different technologies or platforms to try to trick us, such as email, phone calls, text messaging, or social media. While all of this may seem overwhelming, most of these attacks share the same thing: emotion. By knowing the emotional triggers that cyber attackers use, you can often spot their attacks no matter what method they are using.

It all starts with emotions. We, as humans, far too often make decisions based on emotions instead of facts. Fortunately for us, if we know the emotional triggers to look for, we can successfully spot and stop most attacks. Listed below are the most common emotional triggers for which to watch.

**Urgency:** Urgency is one of the most common emotional triggers, as it's so effective. Cyber attackers will often use fear, anxiety, scarcity, or intimidation to rush you into making a mistake. Take, for example, an urgent email from your boss demanding sensitive documents to be sent to her right away, when in reality it is a cyber attacker pretending to be your boss.

**Anger:** You get a message about a political, environmental, or social issue that you are very passionate about – something like “you won’t believe what this political group or corporate company is doing!”

**Surprise / Curiosity:** Sometimes the attacks that are the most successful say the least. Curiosity is evoked with surprise; we want to learn more. It is a response to something unexpected.

**Trust:** Attackers use a name or brand you trust to convince you into taking action. For example, a message pretending to be from your bank, a well-known charity, a trusted government organization, or even a person you know. Just because an email or text message uses a name of an organization you know and their logo, does not mean the message actually came from them.

**Excitement:** You get a text message from your bank or service provider thanking you for making your payments on time. The text message then provides a link where you can claim a reward—a new iPad, how exciting! The link takes you to a website that looks official, but asks for all of your personal information, or says that you need to provide credit card information to cover small shipping/handling costs. This is a cyber attacker who is simply stealing your money or your identity.

**Empathy / Compassion:** Cyber attackers take advantage of your goodwill. For example, after a disaster appears on the news, they will send out millions of fake emails pretending to be a charity serving the victims and asking you for money.

By better understanding these emotional triggers, you will be far better prepared to spot and stop cyber attackers, regardless of the lure, technology, or platform they use.