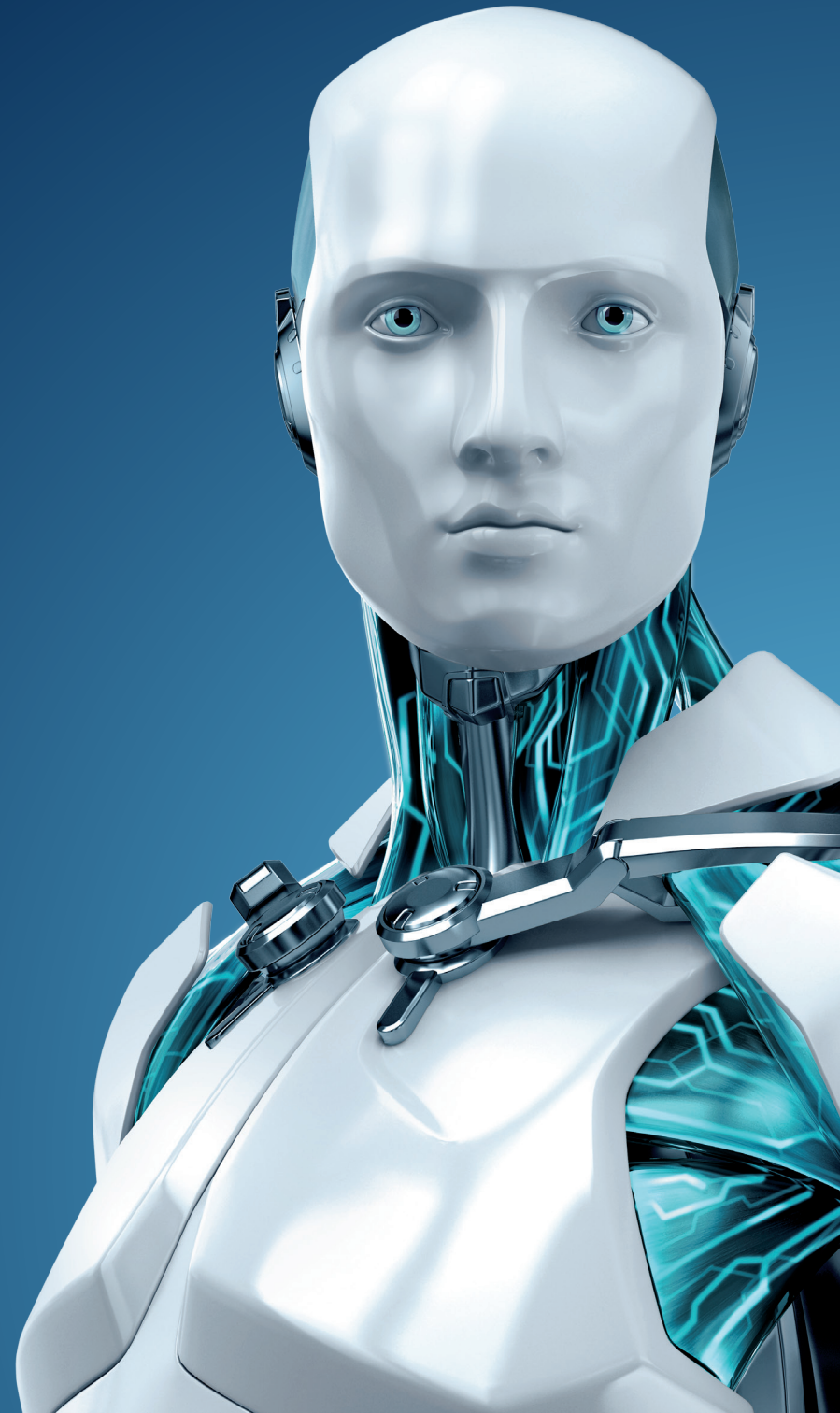


TECH BRIEF

5 two-minute tips to make
yourself more
secure right now



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5 TWO-MINUTE TIPS TO MAKE YOURSELF MORE SECURE RIGHT NOW

By Rob Waugh, We Live Security

Performing a “cyber spring clean” can be time-consuming – but many of us have a few weaknesses we can tighten up in two minutes or less. Whether it’s a PIN you thought up in a rush – which a cybercriminal could guess just as easily – or an option you forgot to switch on, there’s no sense “leaving the door open”. If you’re pinched for time, here are a few instant “fixes” that can make you safer.

1. Is your smartphone PIN easy to remember? Change it

A huge percentage of smartphone users still choose very obvious PIN codes such as 1, 2, 3, 4 or 1111 – and criminals will often guess them, sometimes with the aid of greasy finger marks on screen. This hands over all the data in your mobile device to any criminal who gets hold of it – and that can include anything from the data in your email account to online banking passwords. It’s also worth checking how long the “timeout” on your device is – if it’s too short, an opportunistic thief might be able to get in regardless.

2. Don’t “opt out” of security. Tick the box for two-factor authentication on Twitter and Dropbox

Two-factor authentication makes it far more difficult for cybercriminals to break into accounts on sites such as Twitter and Dropbox. At present, though, the system is “opt-in” – you have to go to settings and add your authentication method manually.

3. Get rid of passwords that end with numbers and “!”

Many sites force users to replace passwords occasionally – and users often respond by adding the required special characters to the end of passwords, or adding numbers there instead. If your password leaks, this is among the first things a password cracker will try. ESET Senior Research Fellow David Harley says, “This also applies where the site requires you to change your password periodically but allows you to do so by appending a number.

4. Check you don’t have viruses right now

Free antivirus software – or instant checks – can’t ever match the peace of mind you get from having software on your computer protecting you 24/7. But if you’re worried you may have clicked the wrong link, or something just seems wrong, ESET’s Online Scanner can perform an instant scan of your PC. <http://www.eset.com/us/online-scanner/>

5. Stop browsing from the coffee shop

“Free” Wi-Fi networks can offer a convenient way to get online – but it’s far more secure to use your smartphone’s data connection and share it with your laptop via Wi-Fi. It’s very difficult to tell whether data is being intercepted on open public networks – and accessing sites where you need a password, such as your email or online banking, can be risky. Don’t take that risk.