

Identity theft

- the crime of the digital age

Digital technology and the Internet have changed the way that criminals work. Some 'traditional' crimes, like burglary, have gone down in recent years, but identity theft is growing. In 2009 there were over 100,000 victims of identity theft in the UK.

What is identity theft?

Criminals steal documents or information about you. Then they pretend to be you.

What information do they steal?

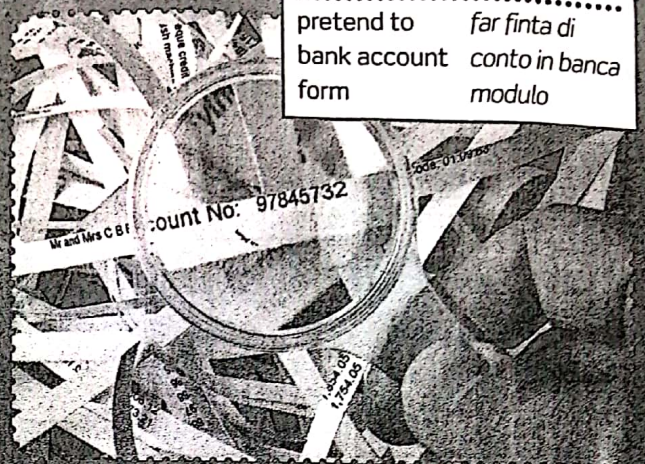
In the UK, there aren't identity cards, so criminals can 'borrow' people's names, addresses, dates of birth, bank account numbers and other personal identification numbers. Then they take money from your bank accounts or they open new bank accounts using your name.

How do they steal it?

Some criminals look in people's rubbish for documents and computer disks that contain information. Then there are computer hackers - criminals who 'get inside' your computer and read the information on it. Sometimes criminals don't need to try very hard. They can find out a lot by surfing the Internet legally! These days people often put their personal information on Facebook, or they talk about their personal lives in a blog. For example, a criminal could find out when you are on holiday and how long you will be away.

Glossary

pretend to	far finta di
bank account	conto in banca
form	modulo



What is 'phishing'?

This is when a criminal contacts you (usually by email) and asks you for personal information. The criminal always pretends to be someone different, for example from a bank or a charity, or they offer you a really good job.

Have there been any famous criminals or victims?

The case of Michelle Brown, an American woman, was so famous that they made a film about her. In 1998 she completed a form and another woman stole it. The woman used Michelle Brown's identity to get a driving licence, to take \$50,000 from the bank and to commit other crimes. The police finally arrested the criminal after 18 months, but for many years after, the real Michelle Brown had terrible problems with the police and with her bank.

How can we stop identity theft?

The best advice is to protect your identity. Don't give personal information to strangers - especially on the Internet.

1 Leggi il brano. Segna le frasi con ✓ (corretta), ✗ (sbagliata) o DS (Doesn't say). K

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Identity theft is a growing crime. _____ | 4 Criminals find addresses in blogs. _____ |
| 2 Identity thieves pretend to be other people. _____ | 5 Michelle Brown was a criminal. _____ |
| 3 People carry identity cards in the UK. _____ | 6 Michelle Brown lost all her money. _____ |

2 Rispondi alle domande. ES

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 What information do identity thieves steal?
_____ | 4 How long did it take the police to arrest her?
_____ |
| 2 How did another woman get Michelle Brown's personal information?
_____ | 5 What advice does the text give to stop identity theft?
_____ |
| 3 How much money did the woman spend?
_____ | 6 Do you think Facebook or other similar sites are dangerous? Why? Why not?
_____ |