



CyberHood Watch

What does (WOT) stand for, and why should we be using IT?

Deborah is stopping by the Hood today... To tell us all about the Web of Trust (WOT) that is a free browser add-on that keeps you safe when you are searching, shopping or just surfing on the Internet. WOT has a large online community of users from around the world that share their knowledge of websites by rating and commenting on the site.

Safety issues from spyware, adware, spam, viruses, browser exploits, unreliable online shops, phishing, inappropriate sites for children, and all sorts of Internet scams. That's a lot of "bad guys", but we (WOT) believes in the power of people-driven security, and if the "good guys" join forces, then we can effectively protect ourselves against growing online threats. Good day to be in the Cyber"HOOD" with Dave and Bill, your CyberHood Watch partners:)



My name is Deborah Salmi, and I am a part of the Web of Trust team.

Download WOT for Internet Explorer or Firefox: <http://www.mywot.com>

Follow us on Twitter: http://www.twitter.com/Web_of_Trust

What is WOT?

Web of Trust (WOT) is a free browser add-on that keeps you safe when you surf and shop on the Internet. WOT's color-coded icons appear beside search results in Google, Yahoo!, Wikipedia, Digg and other popular sites helping you steer clear of online scams, identify theft, unreliable shopping sites and security threats before you click.

How does WOT work?

The WOT community has millions of active members. Their ratings, combined with data from trusted sources such as listings of malware and phishing sites, have given us reputation ratings for over 22 million websites. From popular download sites to online shopping and personal blogs, WOT users rate sites based on four components:

- Trustworthiness
- Vendor reliability
- Privacy
- Child safety

As you browse or search on popular sites, you will see a tiny icon beside the link—green for go, yellow for proceed with caution and red for stop. WOT warns you about sites which can damage your computer or cause other trouble. Your Gmail, Hotmail and Yahoo! mail accounts are also protected from phishing, spam and other email scams. The ratings are updated regularly so you can count on them being up-to-date and reliable.

When you hover your mouse over the icon, a small popup shows a little more detail about the rating. By clicking on the icon, you can visit the scorecard where you can see even more details and read comment by other WOT members.

What if you have children that use the same computer? Or a single adult who prefers to visit sites with mature content? Are there different levels of protection?

Yes. When you download WOT you can choose your level of protection.

We recommend the **Basic level** for just about everyone. You will see:

- Rating icons for all the search engines and other sites WOT supports.
- When you hover your mouse over a WOT rating "donut" a small pop-up will appear that shows you a little more detail about each rating component - Trustworthiness, Privacy, Vendor reliability and Child safety.
- If a site is rated poorly, you will get a warning, with the option to bypass it or see the WOT scorecard which explains more about the site's rating.

For families with children in the house, we recommend a level called **Parental Control**. This setting provides the ultimate protection against dangerous and unknown sites. If a site is rated poorly in the child safety component, or if a site has no rating at all, then WOT will block it from loading. Be aware that good sites can potentially be blocked because they have not received a rating yet.

For experienced web users, there is a **Light** option. This setting has minimal protection. The only rating "donuts" that show when doing a search are for dangerous sites. If you navigate to a poorly rated site, a warning bar will show at the top of your browser instead of the larger warning screen. The small pop-up is disabled.

You mentioned something called the WOT scorecard. What is that?

There is a Website Security Scorecard for every web domain. These scorecards can be seen by anyone, not just WOT users. For example, if you are a site owner, but not a WOT user, you can go to mywot.com and type a URL in the box on the demo page, and the scorecard will open.

The scorecard is designed in such a way that you can see, at-a-glance, the site's information like the popularity and rank within WOT, where the server is located and links to ownership data. You can also see the ratings and comments from WOT users and appearances on negative sources such as phishing and spam black lists and also, references in positive sources like delicious, Digg, or Wikipedia.

So you have to be a WOT user to leave a comment?

Yes. Registration is not required to use WOT for the protection, but if you want to add comments to the scorecard you have to register. The whole point of WOT is to share your knowledge of websites with others, so we encourage people to register.

We know some people are concerned about privacy? What does WOT know about its users and what do you do with that information?

That's an excellent question. The WOT software collects information for three things:

- computing website ratings
- performing statistical analysis
- and preventing abuse of our service

Any information that is no longer needed for these purposes is deleted.

When you visit a website, the add-on sends our service the encrypted hostname so it can load the reputation for you. When you rate a site, the add-on sends any ratings you may choose to give. The information about domains you visit is stored temporarily for computing ratings. Our ratings are computed every 30 minutes. And your IP address is never stored in our database.

When you register with WOT, we request your name, your email address, and a password (which you can choose yourself). This information is stored in a secure database and will not be disclosed to third parties.

How does WOT tackle the issue of fraud? For example a bad guy starts rating his bad site as good and asks his friends to do so.

A website's reputation is set by our users, however, not all users have an equal weight. You must be active and prove yourself before the system takes you seriously.

This makes it more difficult to manipulate the system, and also allows us to more precisely compute how much the reputation estimates can be trusted. If a user's voting behavior is completely erratic, or we notice an actual attempt to manipulate reputations, we simply don't trust that user's votes as much anymore. The system will ignore all ratings created by a user attempting to manipulate reputation data.

Have bad sites been rated good or vice versa?

Like any rating or security system, we run across a handful of false positives and false negatives. Usually we are contacted by the site owner or one of our active users, and we will look at the site individually. In most cases, the reports we get are for smaller sites without many current ratings, and it might be that some old problem that has been fixed is still being reported.

The Internet can be tricky for some adults, but we are concerned about keeping children safe online. How does WOT help keep kids safer?

We think of the Internet as a city with neighborhoods. Some neighborhoods are safe to go in – nice people stay there, you know what to expect and things are familiar. But just like in real life, there are shady neighborhoods on the Internet - red light districts or places where mature subject matter is discussed, and places where you'll get ripped off if you're not careful. While nothing replaces a parent or teacher standing beside you while you explore the neighborhood, that's not always possible, so at least WOT can be there and offer a warning.

We advise parents and teachers to add WOT to their overall computer security system because the traffic-light style of our icons is so simple that even a young child can understand—Green for go, yellow for approach with caution and red for stop.

Within the WOT rating components- trustworthiness, vendor reliability, and privacy is an additional one for child safety. Child safety is the rating which indicates whether the site contains age-inappropriate material of a sexual, hateful, or violent nature. The Parental Control protection level we talked about earlier sets the system to block access to sites with a poor rating in child safety instead of merely giving a warning. It also blocks sites with no rating at all. It's a bit heavy for the experienced user, but especially for kids just exploring the Internet, it's worth the extra protection.

You can always turn that setting on and off too, if adults and kids use the same computer.

Have you noticed any trends regarding poorly rated sites?

Yes, we have.

A year ago, WOT did an analysis of 17 million websites rated by our users to find out how many are risky. Based on sites that were rated poor, we determined that 1 in 20 are dangerous. 1 in 20!

We identified three major categories of risky sites:

- 28% were adult content
- 27% offer free and licensed software for sale or download over the Internet
- 16% are actually fun sites that offered movies, games, music, screensavers, and smileys

Privacy is becoming a bigger issue too, and many sites that place cookies on your computer or offer targeted advertising, while not being dangerous, are sometimes rated poorly because they are annoying.

How about rogue software and phishing attempts?

It's a huge problem. More than 5 million U.S. consumers lost money to phishing attacks during 2008. A recent [Gartner survey](#) reported that 4.3 percent of those who received phishing emails lost money from the scam, at an average of \$351 per phishing incident. Since the financial crisis started, rogue software and email scams have become more prevalent.

A security software company called [Sophos](#), reported that a web page is infected every 4.5 seconds and every day more than 20,000 new samples of malware are discovered. The fake software infects your computer causing annoying popups, but worse than that, the virus you end up with could put you at risk of identity theft or financial fraud. Emails disguised to look like they come from a bank or financial institution trick people into giving away their account numbers and other personal data.

WOT helps with both of those, because the rogue sites are quickly identified, but also because WOT protects the top three web-based email programs – Gmail, Yahoo mail and Windows Live Hotmail. The WOT icon shows up in outbound links in these email programs making spam light up like a Christmas tree covered in red lights!

Who are the people behind Web of Trust and what led them to start WOT?

Our company was founded by two university post-grads from Finland. They were working as researchers in computer security and data mining. During that time they had the idea of creating a reputation system for the web.

It took them about a year to figure out the best method and write the algorithms. They put lots of hard work and thought into Web of Trust. But finally they were ready to make a prototype. That was September 2006. Since then we have had more than 4 million downloads and we are worldwide in 14 languages.

If you had CyberHood watch's magic wand, what change would you like to see happen?

The power of WOT is in the community, so if I had a magic wand I would get everyone to join in and share their experiences by rating websites. We have seen that providing this type of reputation feedback creates responsibility. That seems to be a common goal between WOT and CyberHood Watch – to help foster and rally Responsible CyberCitizens to make the Internet safer for everyone.

Hopefully with WOT as part of your security armor you'll feel better about exploring the web and you'll have more confidence in that unknown website you just found. On the opposite side, you get a warning if the site shouldn't be trusted. So, armed with useful information, you can make an informed decision whether to continue or not.

We believe that Web of Trust provides real, relevant, useful information that helps people surf the web safely. The beauty of our service is that the users work together to form the reputation of a site. It's not just some automated system. That's why Web of Trust is known as people-driven Internet security.

Download WOT for Internet Explorer or Firefox: <http://www.mywot.com>

You can also listen to Deborah's interview on the: CHWradio.com

Thank you Deborah for your time and especially your kindness and willingness to help others, we wish you much success...

Your CyberHood Watch Partners

Dave and Bill

