

Identity Theft

Let's get started...

Imagine you find someone's wallet on the ground. Inside the wallet is a credit card, driver's license, and social security card. What do you do?

Background:

Identity theft happens when personal information is stolen and used by another person. People usually commit identity theft for financial reasons, but other reasons include illegal immigration, terrorism, and spying. According to the FBI, identity theft is the fastest growing crime in America. In 2006, identity thieves stole around \$56 billion dollars in total; on average, each victim of identity theft lost around \$6,300 dollars. The punishments of identity theft include fines and going to jail.



In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:

How can thieves get your personal information?

What kinds of personal information do thieves steal?

What should you do if you find out someone is using your personal information?

Have you (or someone you know) been a victim of identity theft?

Share your partner's answers with the group.

For more information about identity theft:

Federal Trade Commission:
<http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/>

Department of Justice:
<http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/fraud/idtheft.html>

The Police Notebook
<http://www.ou.edu/oupd/idtheft.htm>



Discussion Questions:

Before today, had you heard of identity theft?

Identity theft is becoming more common in America. Is identity theft common in your native country?

In America, identity theft is punished by fines or jail time. What happens in your native country if someone commits identity theft?

Do you know anyone who has been a victim of identity theft? What happened?

Is it easy to know if someone is committing identity theft? What do identity thieves look like? What kind of clothes do they wear?

What are some ways to prevent identity theft? (Examples: When mailing a letter, writing a check, ordering a credit card, taking money out from an ATM, shopping online, throwing away junk mail, or using a computer.)

Why is identity theft more common today than it was fifty years ago? Is identity theft easier today than it was fifty years ago? Some people think that technology helps identity thieves. How does technology help them?

Why do people commit identity theft? Do you think people who commit identity theft commit other crimes, too?

When you were a child, did you want to change your name? If you could change your name, what would you change it to?

How do you know if someone has stolen your personal information?
What should you do about it?

What are some things the government should do to prevent identity theft? Does the government in your native country help prevent identity theft?

What things can you do to protect yourself and your family from identity theft?

New words and Idioms:

identity theft, wallet, social security card, stolen, commit, financial, illegal, immigration, terrorism, spying, victim, punishment, jail, fine, thieves, protect, prevent, junk mail, technology, thieves, white-collar crime