Practical Applications:

ONLINE SHOPPING AND BLOGGING

a. **Always use a secure Internet connection when making a purchase.**
   Reputable sites use technologies such as SSL (Secure Socket Layer) or SET (Secure Electronic Transmission) that encrypt data during transmission.

   You can tell if this technology is in use when the **lock icon** at the bottom of your web browser window is closed. (In no case should you send your credit card number by e-mail!) Another way is to check the address of the site you are accessing; it should begin with **https**.

b. **Shop with businesses you already know and trust.**
   Many retailers now offer online shopping. One advantage is that some let you return goods to their store, instead of shipping it back[1]. If you want to make a purchase[2] from a store you have not heard of before, do some research and make sure the site lists a **physical address**, not just a post office box.

c. **Look for coupons and other discounts.**
   Many online merchants offer **rebates** that can save you a bundle of money. To receive the discount, typically you enter the **coupon code** in the order form.
   For travellers, many airline sites offer weekly specials and e-fares. To keep informed of these discounts, sign up for **newsletters** at their websites.

d. **Compare shops.**
   So-called **shopping bots** compare prices for products across a number of websites. You'd be amazed at the range of prices you'll find.

e. **Be skeptical.**
   Be aware of deals that appear too good to be true. They probably are. If you have suspicions, call the merchant and ask those tough questions. If no phone number is listed on the site take your business somewhere else.

f. **Protect private information.**
   All reputable sites should post a **privacy policy** that explains what they do with customer information. Take a few minutes to review it. Even if you have no objections, do not provide unnecessary information by filling out the optional fields in the order form.

g. **Review the return and refund policy.**
   How do you return unwanted purchases? How long do you have? Will you receive a full refund? Who pays for return shipping? An e-retailer should provide answers. If not, call the merchant before you buy.

h. **Check the shipping costs.**
   Shipping, especially for next day delivery, could make the total purchase price more than what you would pay in a retail store. At one time, many sites offered free shipping as a way to attract customers. While those days are over for the most part, some sites still offer free or discounted shipping for purchases over a certain amount.

i. **Pay with plastic.**
   Credit cards offer the same consumer protection whether shopping online or offline.

j. **Print a copy of your order for your records.**
   After you submit an order, you will get a screen with details of the transaction. Sometimes there is a link to a web page where you can check the delivery status. You may also receive an e-mail confirmation.

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1. *to ship something back:* rispedire al mittente.   **2.** *purchase:* acquisto.

With newsgroups and websites, people all around the world easily and inexpensively express themselves online. **Weblogs**, commonly referred to as **blogs**, are a relatively new form of personal publishing. In the last few years the Web has witnessed[1] a veritable explosion of blogs. A blog is similar to an electronic journal or diary. The writer, known as a blogger, makes periodic entries[2], sometimes as frequently as a few times a day. Blogs can be on any subject, for instance, politics, relationships or daily observations while driving to work. These blogs may be of interest only to the blogger's family and friends or they can command the attention of a global audience. It all depends on how thoughtful and compelling they are. What distinguishes blogs from other online content is that they are highly personal, reflecting the blogger's point of view.

In the early days of blogging, the late 1990s, blogs typically consisted of lists of links to interesting websites or articles, along with some annotations or a commentary from the blog's editor. The editor acted as a personal guide to the volume of information that was flooding the Web. Some current blogs still adhere to this format, but many others have become a chronological posting of all kinds of material, including written musings[3], photos and references to other blogs. One thing has remained consistent though: new entries appear at the top of the page and older ones are archived according to date.

Find That Blog

Thousands of blogs have sprouted[4] like wild flowers after a rain, so the problem is finding the ones that interest you. Online search tools help with the hunt:
- **Eatonweb Portal**, which categorises blogs by subject, language and country;
- **Feedster**, a search engine that allows you to find specific blog postings;
- **Google's Weblog** directory, which categorises blogs into subject areas.

Express Yourself

Not too long ago, publishing your own blog required technical know-how, similar to having your own website. Fortunately for today's aspiring blogger, new software and online tools make blogging almost as easy as writing e-mail using a web-based service like Hotmail or Yahoo!

Here's how it works: first you sign up for service, and then you log into a password-protected web page and write your copy. If you want, you can add links to other online resources. After you've composed your thoughts, pressing the Send button you can publish your latest missive to your personal blog. It's easy.

If you're ready to let your thoughts loose[5], here are two free services to evaluate:

Blogger.com helps you set up an account, choose from a number of different page designs and begin blogging in few minutes.

Pitas.com provides a very basic blogging service, without the customisation[6] you can achieve with Blogger.com.

Now you have no excuse to remain silent. But before you shout out loud to the world, remember that unless you publish a private blog, anything you write can be read by the public, so be mindful of what you say.

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1. *to witness:* testimoniare.
2. *entry:* inserzione.
3. *musing:* riflessione.
4. *to sprout:* nascere, germogliare.
5. *to let (let-let) something loose:* lasciare andare.
6. *customisation:* personalizzazione.