

Small Business Cyber Security Checklist

Ten controls every Melbourne small business should have in place. Work down the list — if you cannot tick an item with confidence, that is where to start.

- 1 Multi-factor authentication**
On Microsoft 365, remote access and banking.
Enforced by policy, not left to staff choice.
- 2 Patch operating systems**
Windows and macOS updates applied on a schedule, within two weeks — 48 hours for critical flaws.
- 3 Patch applications**
Browsers, Office, PDF readers and anything internet-facing. These are the common entry points.
- 4 Email filtering & authentication**
Spam and phishing filtering, plus SPF, DKIM and DMARC records configured and monitored.
- 5 Endpoint detection & response**
EDR on every workstation and server. Traditional antivirus alone is no longer sufficient.
- 6 Tested backups**
Including Microsoft 365 data. A restore actually performed and witnessed in the last 12 months.
- 7 Business-grade firewall**
Not the modem from your ISP. Firmware maintained and the licence current.
- 8 Restrict admin privileges**
Day-to-day accounts are standard users. Admin rights granted only when needed.
- 9 Staff awareness training**
Short, regular and measured with simulated phishing — not a single induction slide deck.
- 10 Written incident response plan**
Who to call, what to disconnect, and your Notifiable Data Breaches obligations. On paper.

IF YOU ONLY DO THREE THINGS THIS QUARTER

FIRST

Turn on MFA everywhere

The single highest-impact control, and it costs nothing on the Microsoft 365 licences you already hold.

SECOND

Test a restore

Not check that backups ran — actually restore a file and a mailbox, and watch it happen.

THIRD

Write the plan down

One page: who to call, what to disconnect, who notifies whom. Print it. Networks fail too.

GROUNDING IN THE ESSENTIAL EIGHT

Items 1, 2, 3, 6 and 8 map directly to the Australian Signals Directorate's Essential Eight mitigation strategies. Ask your IT provider which of the eight you meet, and at what maturity level — a provider who cannot answer that specifically is guessing.