

The Password Problem

It's hard to get through a day on the internet without encountering dozens of requests for your username and password. With more and more of our work and leisure time spent online, most people find that remembering a unique password for each account they have is an impossible task. It's made harder when sites have strange rules about how you must form your passwords. Some sites prohibit special characters like &, %, #, and @ in passwords. Other sites require them. Some sites have maximum length limits on passwords that are shorter than the minimum length required by other sites. What is the modern, internet-savvy user supposed to do?

Certainly not what most of us do now...

- Are there little yellow notes stuck to the side of your monitor with usernames and passwords scribbled on them?
- Do you have at least one computer or online account where the password is "password"?
- Do you use your pet's name as a password, and tell yourself you're making it more secure by adding "123" to the end?
- Do you have accounts on 387 websites and log into all of them with one of three favorite, easy-to-remember passwords?
- Did you last change the password for your bank account shortly after the turn of the century? Before?

If you've secretly answered "yes, but..." to any of these, don't worry. We won't tell anyone, and we'll show you how to create and manage strong, secure passwords without breaking a sweat.

You'll sleep better at night knowing you're safer from identity theft, and with the tricks you'll learn here you can help your friends and relatives be safer online as well.

STRONG PASSWORDS

1 CHOOSE A FAMILIAR PHRASE YOU'LL REMEMBER

"Happiness is having a scratch for every itch."

2 USE THE FIRST LETTER FROM EACH WORD

Hih4s4ei

 we changed "for" to 4


3 ADD "SPECIAL" CHARACTERS

#Hih4s4ei:

4 REUSE YOUR PASSWORD BY ADDING A PREFIX OR SUFFIX TO CUSTOMIZE IT FOR EACH WEBSITE

#Hih4s4ei:YtB (for YouTube)

fBk#Hih4s4ei: (for Facebook)

 Mix case and use the 1st letter and the next 2 consonants in the name.

Or, even better, make up a rule of your own.

What **Not** To Use In Your Password

There are some things you should not use when you're creating a password. All of the following are chosen as passwords so frequently that password cracking software has been developed to take advantage of their inherent weaknesses:

- Your name, or the name of your spouse, parent, child, or pet
- The name of a friend (real or imaginary), your boss or a coworker
- Your phone number, license plate number or any part of your social security number
- Birth dates or other easily obtained information about you, your family or your friends
- A dictionary word, either English or foreign
- Passwords of all the same letter
- Simple patterns on the keyboard, like "qwerty"
- Any of the above followed by a single digit or a sequence of ordered digits (like 123)
- Any of the above spelled backwards

...and one more thing to remember. You should never use a password that has been used as an example in an article about how to create good passwords. That includes this guide. Once a password has been published, it's no longer useful.

If this seems like we've eliminated any password that has a prayer of being memorable, don't worry! We'll show you how to avoid all of those pitfalls.

Choosing a secure password

Good passwords have a simple set of properties:

- They have both upper and lower case letters
- They have digits and/or punctuation characters as well as letters
- They are easy to remember, so they do not have to be written down
- They are at least seven or eight characters long, but the longer the better.
- They can be typed quickly, so someone else cannot easily look over your shoulder

Stay Safe with Secure Passwords

- Use as secure a password as possible
- Change your passwords periodically
- Don't reuse passwords between sites

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STRONG PASSWORDS Prevent Identity Theft!

