

Guidelines for Creating a Strong Password

Safe passwords don't have to be hard to create; they just have to be hard to guess. In order to protect your personal electronic data, setting a strong password is vitally important. There are 5 principles when protecting passwords:

- Length – use at least 10 characters
- Strength – mix it up with capitals, characters, and numbers
- Obscure – use nothing that is associated with you, your family, your company, etc.
- Protect – do not place paper reminders near your computer
- Change – the more sensitive the information, the more frequently you should change your password—every 90 days is suggested

The purpose to set a strong password is to minimize the potential risk of unauthorized access to important data and use of computing resources.

Examples of weak passwords:

- Use of repeated numbers, characters or sequences such as 12345678, bbbbbbbb, or 33333333
- Use of words in dictionary such as the word "password"
- Use of personal related information Social Security or Account Number or Variation of your name or family member names

Examples of how to set up a strong password:

- Use a word with digits of a memorable date sprinkled inside it (e.g., vacation -> 0vac2a0t9io19ln99)
- Use a memorable word – it can even be a dictionary word or name but move the hands up a row from the home row on the keyboard when typing it. This way, “GoFishing” would become “T9R8wy8ht”. This technique would be most usable by touch-typists.



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- Create a passphrase and use the first letter of each word. The phrase "Now is the time for all good persons ..." would yield the password "NittfaGp". Since our rules required still more complexity; put a punctuation character in front – "!" for example, to make it "!Nittfagp".
- Transform words using by substituting characters for letters - @ or ^ for "a", \$ for "s", 3 for "e". The word "Geekspeak" might become "G33k\$p3^k."
- Do the unexpected with characters and numbers and put them at the beginning or middle of a password instead of the end.
- A word spelled backwards with at least one letter represented by a character or number; \$lidoffaD = Daffodils (the "\$" replaces the "s") or y1frettuB = Butterfly (the "1" replaces the "l")

Guidelines for Establishing Security Questions

Often, when setting up a membership or an account you are asked to provide answers to security questions that are used when you need a password reset. Security questions that someone can easily discover the answer to expose you to theft on the site involved, and allow the criminal to collect additional information about you. When given a choice, never pick a hint whose answer is easily discoverable.

When all the choices are easily discoverable, feel free to ignore the question and use an answer that means something to you; for example, sunshine. The site isn't actually validating this information for accuracy; they just want you to provide the same answer that you used to establish the account. Enter whatever you want, but make it memorable.



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