



PASSWORDS... *@*!-8*#!

We all have them (even if you don't think you do!), we all use them and most of us would admit to reusing a password. These days online accounts are used for everything from email to buying stamps and paying the gas bill. So here are some top tips on how to keep them strong and keep your online world secure.

Secret Code, NOT BIRTHDAY: Your password is like a key to your online stuff. Don't use birthdays or pet names – anyone who knows you could guess it!

Mix it Up: Strong passwords have a variety of uppercase & lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols (# @ \$) to make them tougher to crack.

Longer is Stronger: The longer your password, the better! Aim for 12+ characters, like a secret sentence with no spaces.

Use a Password Manager: Software that uses a secure database on your device, helping keep track, allowing you to use more unique and strong passwords.

One Per Treasure Chest: Don't use the same key for all your doors! Make a unique password for each website or account. This keeps them all safe.

Write it Down, But Hide it Well: Remembering passwords is hard! Write them down, but hide them well. Not a sticky note on your computer! Maybe a hidden notebook or ask a trusted family member to keep them safe (perhaps in a code that triggers your memory, without revealing the passwords themselves).

Beware the Shoulder Surfers: Don't type your password in public if someone might be peeking! Shield the keyboard and be careful on shared computers.

Using a password manager can be very helpful in keeping track of your accounts and passwords. Using one will allow you to use stronger unique passwords for more or all of your accounts. Internet browsers such as Chrome, Edge and Firefox will offer to save passwords when you enter them. These passwords can be viewed later in the in a list found in the browser's settings. This saved list should be secure providing your computer also has a password/pin when you turn it on. The saved password list should only be accessible to you or those who know the computer password.

I know it is hard to keep unique passwords for all accounts, but my suggestion is if it really seems too much, please make sure your main email account(s) password(s) is/are secure. Email accounts are often used as a recovery method for other online accounts and thus could provide a gateway for a malicious actor to access other services. If there is one online service you should concentrate on, it is recommended that your primary email account be the one. Some email providers such as outlook.com and gmail.com have a 'Security Check-Up' in the account area that will help with more advanced options such as Multi-Factor Authentication (Subject for another article...), recovery numbers, connected apps etc.

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