Secure Passwords

A QUICK-GUIDE FOR PARENTS & TEENS

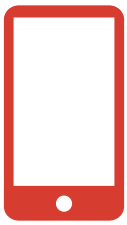
ConnectSafely

Don't share passwords

Never give out your password to anyone. Never give it to friends, even if they're really good friends. A friend can – maybe even accidentally – pass your password along to others or even become an ex-friend and abuse it. A possible exception is young children sharing passwords with parents.

Mix em up

Don't use the same password on multiple sites or apps. If any of your sites are hacked or if a person working at that site steals your password, criminals could try using it on your other sites and apps.

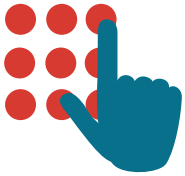


Longer is better

Make the password at least 12 characters long. Security experts are now recommending a "pass phrase" rather than simply a password. Such a phrase should be relatively long – perhaps 20 characters or so and consist of seemingly random words strung together along with numbers, symbols and upper and lower case letters. Think of something that you can remember but others couldn't guess, such as YellowChocolate#56CadillacFi$h. Avoid using famous quotations that might be easy to guess.

Diversify characters

Include numbers, capital letters and symbols. Consider using a $ instead of an S or a 1 instead of an L, or including an & or % – but note that $1ngle is NOT a good password. Password thieves are onto this. But Mf$J1ravng (short for "My friend Sam Jones is really a very nice guy) is an excellent password.



*For more about passwords, visit ConnectSafely.org/passwords. For a printable pdf, visit connectsafely.org/quickguides.

Don't post it in plain sight

This might seem obvious but studies have found that a lot of people post their password on their monitor with a sticky note. Bad idea. If you must write it down, hide the note somewhere where no one can find it.

Consider a password manager

Programs, apps and web services like RoboForm or Lastpass let you create a different and very strong password for each of your sites. But you only have to remember the one password to access the program or secure site or app that stores your passwords for you.

Multi-factor authentication

Many services offer an option to verify your identity if someone logs on to your account from an unrecognized device. The typical method is to send a text or other type of message to a mobile device registered to you with a code you need to type in to verity it's really you. In most cases, you will not be required to use this code when logging on from a known device such as your own computer, tablet or phone.

Don't fall for phishing attacks

Be very careful before clicking on a link (even if it appears to be from a legitimate site) asking you to log in, change your password or provide any other personal information. It might be legit or it might be a "phishing" scam where the information you enter goes to a hacker. When in doubt, log on manually by typing what you know to be the site's URL into your browser window.

Secure your systems

The best password in the world might not do you any good if someone is looking over your shoulder while you type or if you forget to log out on a cybercafe computer. Malicious software, including "keyboard loggers" that record all of your keystrokes, has been used to steal passwords and other information. To increase security, make sure you're using up-to-date anti-malware software and that your operating system is up-to-date.

Protect your phone

Most phones can be locked so that the only way to use them is to type in a code, typically a string of numbers or maybe a pattern you draw on the screen. Some new phones allow you to register fingerprints, which are quite secure. Sometimes when people with bad intentions find unlocked phones, they use them to steal the owners' information, make a lot of calls, or send texts that look like they're coming from the owner. Someone posing as you could send texts that make it look like you're bullying or harassing someone in your address book with inappropriate images or words. Know how to use services like iCloud and Google Find Your Phone to be able to locate, lock or erase your phone if it's lost or stolen.

52%

Of online adults have used two-factor authentication on their online accounts.

*Pew Research Center

57%

Of online users say they vary their passwords across their online accounts.

*Pew Research Center

39%

Of online users say most of their passwords are the same or very similar to one another.

*Pew Research Center