

Passwords

A **password** is a string of characters used to protect something valuable. For example, your WiFi password stops outsiders using your connection; it is usually set by the supplier, but you can change it to something different. Other passwords are used to control access to accounts that you own e.g. email, online shopping, banking, etc. You normally generate these passwords yourself. Passwords should be very difficult for anyone else to find out – often called **strong** passwords - and must be **stored securely**.

How to create a good password†

A good way to create a strong and memorable password is to use three random words. Numbers and symbols can still be used if wanted or needed, for example: *3redhousemonkeys27!*

Some accounts may tell you what they want in your password e.g.

- number of characters (usually eight or more)
- UPPER and lower case
- digits (1, 2, 3 ...)
- special characters (# ? % ...)

† *This advice comes from the National Cyber Security Centre!*

Be creative and use words memorable only to you, so that people can't guess your password. However, your social media accounts can give away vital clues about yourself so **don't** use words the following personal details which might be easy for people to find.

- ~~Current partner's name~~
- ~~Child's name~~
- ~~Other family members' name~~
- ~~Pet's name~~
- ~~Place of birth~~
- ~~Something related to your favourite sports team.~~
- Etc.

Cyber criminals are very smart and know many of the simple substitutions we use, such as *Pa55word*, which utilise symbols to replace letters.

Some passwords are more important than others. It makes sense to put most effort into safeguarding your most important passwords. Think about it:

- How worried would you be if a criminal got access to your **bank account**?
- How worried would you be if the access was to your account with your **local library**?
- How worried would you be if someone pretended to be you by using your **email address**?

How to keep your passwords secure

Ideally you should keep them in your head! But ...

As we get older, our memory can let us down. Also, we tend to need more and more passwords for different accounts.

You might think that one way to solve this is to reuse the same password over and over again. **Wrong!** If a criminal gets hold of the password for one account then he or she has access to them all 😞

Arguably the best way is to use a **password manager** which is a way of securing your passwords in a software vault and making them available to you on demand.

If this isn't for you, then you are going to have to write them down. You are often told not to do this, but if you must, get a separate book – not the back of your diary! - and keep it secure. **Do not write passwords on post-it notes stuck to your computer.**