



A Reminder About Passwords

Passwords are often used to grant access to computer systems to approved parties. For convenience, most users pick a password that is simple and easy to remember. Most pick one password and use it 1) for all accounts, 2) use it all the time, 3) never change it, and 4) write it down so they can refer to it if they forget it during vacation.

A password shouldn't be easy to guess, such as your birthday or spouse's name. If the password is written down, guessing doesn't even matter. And if the password is never changed, then repeated attacks are more likely to occur. When choosing passwords, keep the following fundamentals in mind:

1. Use a minimum of 8 characters.
2. Use a combination of numbers (1-9), alpha characters (A-Z), and special characters (!, @, #, %, ^, &, *, +, =).
3. Don't pick a password that someone can easily guess. Here's a list of examples:
 - Don't use your login name in any form (as-is, reversed, capitalized, doubled, etc.)
 - Don't use your first or last name in any form.
 - Don't use your spouse's or child's name, *unless* you are using it as a component of a pass phrase.
 - Don't use other information easily obtained about you. This included license plate numbers, telephone numbers, social security numbers, the brand of your automobile, the name of the street you live on, etc.
 - Don't use a password of all digits, or all of the same letter. This significantly decreases the search time for a cracker.
4. Use a separate password for different accounts. Try associating the password with the account. If you have an account to purchase books online, use a pass phrase that is derived from a book title.
5. Do not write down your password and leave it in an easy to view spot.
6. Change your password regularly. There is temptation to recycle old passwords. Use a new password every time you change it!
7. Do not give other people your password, intentionally or unintentionally. While it might seem efficient to give your colleague your password so he or she can get a file off of your computer, who is to say that they will not write it down somewhere for ease of remembering. You also want to make sure that it is difficult for others to see you type in your password.