

Passwords: The First Line of Defense

It used to be that some locked file cabinets and a sturdy safe were the ways that we protected our information. In the digital age, we carry fewer physical keys and many more PINS, passwords, and passphrases. These digital keys are only as secure as your storage of them. Having a list of usernames and passwords under your keyboard is not secure. Having that list saved in an unencrypted file on your computer isn't much better.

It is best practice to NOT use the same password for every account. If a hacker breaks into one account, it puts all the others at risk. However, that leads to relying on your memory for multiple passwords. Which password did you use for which account? How many times a week do you use the "Forgot your password" feature on websites?

The first step is to learn to make strong passwords that will also be easy for you to remember.

It is not recommended that you use words or phrases that people would easily associate with you like your name, your kids' names, your pets' names your mother's maiden name, your street, the name of your condominium association, etc.

Instead, try to think about something that has meaning to you that people wouldn't immediately associate with you.

- You've seen Phantom of the Opera 10 times (Phant0m10*)
- You're an avid fan of Dancing with the Stars (Dnc1ingWith*s)
- Your favorite summer activity is whale watching (WhaleW0tcher#1)
- You spend your spare time crocheting (Cr0chetTh1s#)
- Your favorite movie is Silence of the Lambs (Hell0Clar1ce!)

Strong Password Characteristics

To Create a Strong Password, it Should Have Several Characteristics:

Your password should be no less than 8 characters – preferably 12-14.

Your password must contain at least one of each of the following:



- *A capital letter (ABC)*
- *A lower-case letter (abc)*
- *A number (123)*
- *A symbol (#\$%)*

Passphrases should follow these guidelines and can be a convenient way to make a complex password that is easy to remember. Come up with a phrase that will be easy for you to remember and then abbreviate it.

Examples of Passphrases using movie quotes:

- Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn = Fmd1dgadamn!
- Fasten your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy night. = Fys!lg2babn!
- Love means never having to say you're sorry = Lmnh2sys0rry!

