

Password Guidelines

Your username and password allows you to log into the network and access your email. ITS strongly recommends that all users choose *good* passwords. This page will provide you with guidelines for choosing a good password and avoiding a poor password.

Poor passwords include the following:

- Any word that can be found in a dictionary. This also includes slang, musical groups, TV characters, male or female names, sports teams, etc. This also includes any words that may be found in non-English dictionaries.
- Any simple key combinations. e.g.: qwerty, 123456, zzzzzz, 111111, etc.
- Any combination of your username or full name. This includes adding numbers to the end or beginning of your user name or using multiple instances of your name or initials.
- Any personal information about yourself, including: birthday, zip code, social security number, address, pet's name, etc.

Choosing a complex password that cannot be "cracked" is useless if you cannot remember it. Here is a tip for choosing a complex password that is also easy to remember:

- Make up a sentence.
- Take the first characters of the words in that sentence, mix upper and lower case, add punctuation and digits, and use that as your password.

e.g.: "My dog has six legs" becomes "Mdh6l."

e.g.: "Etown - Let Us Connect You!" becomes "E-Lucy!"

- Deliberately misspell words "Mississippi" password misasipe
- Interweave two words or a word and a number sequence that is meaningful to you. For example, your favorite fruit and a memorable year "apple 1993" password ap19p93le

Passwords must meet the following rules

- **Do not contain all or part of the user's account name.**
- **Contain characters from three of the following four categories:**
 - **English uppercase characters (A through Z).**
 - **English lowercase characters (a through z).**
 - **Base-10 digits (0 through 9).**
 - **Non-alphanumeric (for example, !, \$, #, %). extended ASCII, symbolic, or linguistic characters.**

Very Important: Some DON'Ts when Creating a Password or logging into the network

- DON'T leave an unattended computer logged on. Always log off computers when leaving the immediate area.
- NEVER write the password down and NEVER write it down and put it on a sticky note under the keyboard or mouse pad -- You would be surprised!
- NEVER send your password via email or give it over the phone to someone claiming to be a System Administrator -- if they were they wouldn't need your password
- DON'T use proper names especially not your own name or other personal name.
- DON'T use numbers based on a particular piece of information which has meaning to you that can be derived by others, for example: your room # or street number
- DON'T use any information which someone could readily obtain about you (your make of car, the street you live on, your alma matter, the name of your spouse or children).
- DON'T use: the word "password" as your password. Examples of other frequently hacked words in passwords include: new, my, pass, word, you
- DON'T use keyboard keys in sequence or letters/numbers in sequence, for example: QWERTY, abcabc, abc123
- DON'T use a password which is so difficult for you to remember that you will forget it if you don't write it down
- Your new password should differ substantially from your old one
- DON'T use the same password on every account, **they should be unique**

Still not convinced password protection is worth the effort?

Hackers (people who attempt to gain unauthorized access to computing systems) employ an abundance of password-guessing tools, including electronic dictionaries, word lists in various languages, and algorithms that test for strategies frequently used in creating passwords. Password cracking programs have the ability to guess your password at increasingly fast rates; many can try every word in a dictionary, those words reversed, and those words in combination with several other characters in just a few hours.

In addition, given the booming interest in the Internet, more people than ever are computing, meaning more people with less skill are attempting to hack. Indeed, it's quite easy to find instructions on the Web about how to breach computer system security.

While hacking into user accounts by strangers accounts for less than 3% of all computer crime, hackers within the local area network account for close to 10% of reported computer crime. It is also true that sometimes hackers do more good than harm, by identifying weaknesses in computer systems.

Choosing your password is the single most important step you can do to protect your data. Choose your password with care.

Remember "A good password is easy to remember, but hard to guess".