

Creating Strong Passwords

Cyberbullying Lesson 3, Student Activity 5

Safe passwords don't have to be hard to create; they just need to be hard to guess.

Weak passwords

- **Passwo**: The word **Password** is the most commonly used password and it is pathetically weak as are **default** and **blank**. These are simple words and easily guessed or broken with a dictionary assault.
- **Smith19**: Though this uses 9 characters and includes letters and numbers, names that are associated with you or your family, or uses other identifying information such as birth year, are easily hacked.
- **F1avoR**: Though it mixes up capitals and numbers, it is too short and substituting the number 1 for the letter l is easy to guess.

Strong passwords

It's easy and can actually be fun to create strong passwords and the payoff in increased safety is huge. There are five principles for building strong passwords:

- **Length**: Use at least 10 characters.
- **Strength**: Mix it up with capitals, characters, and numbers.
- **Unknown**: Use nothing that is associated with you, your family, your company, etc.
- **Protect**: Do not place paper reminders with passwords on them near your computer. Keeping a folder that is private to you is a good way to note passwords if you forget them.
- **Change**: The more sensitive the information, the more frequently you should change your password.

On the next page are examples of passwords that are strong but also easy to remember.

Criteria	Password
Incorporate shortcut codes or acronyms. Use text message shorthand	CStHnknAU2day = Can't Stop Thinking About You Today
	2Hot2Hndle = too hot to handle
Use a phrase that describes what you're doing, with key letters replaced by a number or symbol.	1mlook1ngatyahoo = I'm looking at Yahoo (The I's have been replaced with 1's.)
	My@HomeWorkNeverEnds
Spell a word backwards with at least one letter represented by a character or number.	etalocohC = Chocolate (the ! replaces the l)
	y1frettuB = Butterfly (the 1 replaces the l)
Make a pattern on your keyboard in any shape you want.	QWERT654321 – This includes the 5 letters from left to right and the numbers from right to left on the top two rows of your keyboard.
	1QAZSDRFVGY7 is really just hitting keys that form a W on your keyboard

Beware of simple password hints

You are often given a choice of password hints when setting up a membership or an account—your mother's maiden name or where you were born. Security questions that have answers that are easy to discover put you at risk of someone accessing that site, and may enable a criminal to collect additional information about you. When you have a choice, never pick a security question that is easy to discover. Feel free to use a word that means something to you such as **sunshine** but would mean nothing to a criminal. No matter what the question, you can enter whatever you want; just make it memorable.