

Passwords

Correctly using passwords is one of the most effective ways to ensure security of your IT devices. If criminals access the data on your devices, they could take over your ID, access your bank account, etc.

Avoid using easy to guess passwords – in 2020 the most used password was 123456, not only is this easy to guess, but it would take a hacker less than a second to crack it using widely available software. Most people use simple and easy-to-remember passwords, because it's convenient. But the problem is that most memorable passwords are highly vulnerable to cracking. However, you can improve your protection by following some simple rules

Password tips:

- Avoid using obvious words, names or strings of numbers.
- Only you should know your password, if someone is asking for your password, it's a scam.
- Use different passwords for different accounts. Then, if one account is compromised, at least the others won't be at risk
- Ideally your password should not be an actual word but a random combination of numbers, letters, and symbols or a PassPhrase (see below).
- Make it at around 8-12 characters long. The longer a password is, the better – but be sensible!
- Do not be tempted to substitute numbers or characters for letters. E.g. a '5' for a 'S' in 5String instead of String. This offers no effective additional protection.
- If someone who knows you well has 20 goes at guessing it and succeeds, then it is not strong enough. If your friends can guess it, so can the criminals.
- Write down passwords if you have to. But ensure they are stored securely and away from the relevant device.
- Don't use information in your password that others might know about you or that's in your social media (e.g., birthdays, children's or pet's names, car model, etc.).
- Where available, other security features, such as fingerprint or facial authenticators, are highly effective at preventing unauthorised access.
- Email accounts are prize targets for hackers as they are often used to unlock or change passwords for other accounts, therefore email account passwords should be especially strong and different to passwords used for other accounts with multi-factor authentication considered.

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