

Are you protected? ONLINE PASSWORD SECURITY



Take a moment to think about the number of online accounts you have. From social media to online banking, these accounts contain information about your personal life. The best way to protect your private data is to choose secure passwords. The following tips can help you avoid common mistakes and keep your personal details safe online.

Common Password Mistakes

The following password mistakes are often at the root of hacks and should be avoided:

- Using dictionary words, common misspellings, slang phrases or backwards spelling. Another common error is using consecutive keyboard letters such as "12345" or "qwerty." Password-cracking programs can get past these combinations very quickly.
- Weak security questions. When a password is forgotten, a user may need to answer security questions to verify their identity. The answers often involve the name of a child, spouse or pet. Hackers can easily obtain clues by looking at social media profiles.
- Simple or reused passwords. Many users create passwords from easily remembered information such as family names, birth dates and ages or by using favorite colors and song titles. When the same passwords are used for both social media and bank accounts, identity theft can occur.
- Social engineering. Considered to be a trickier form of hacking, social engineering involves manipulating people into revealing personal information through building trust and getting them to break their normal security procedures.

Create Strong Passwords

Building strong passwords is the key to online security. Follow these steps to avoid hacking and identity theft:

- Choose a password that has at least 16 characters and contains uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and symbols. Some websites provide a password strength meter for assistance.
- Use a different password for each online account and ensure no one is watching when a password is entered. Always log out completely when finished on the website.
- Use security software that protects the computer from keystroke logging and other forms of malware.
- Do not enter passwords when using an unsecure Wi-Fi connection or when using someone else's computer. Either or both can result in stolen passwords.
- Do not trust passwords to a friend. It is best practice to always keep passwords private.
- Change passwords at regular intervals, and do not reuse them.
- Keep password lists away from the computer, and do not store them in the browser. This makes them much more difficult to steal.

Secure passwords are the foundation of online security and are your **best defense against hacking.**