

HOW SECURE IS MY PASSWORD?

Keep Your Online Identity Safe by Proper Password Maintenance

[We've already talked about how important your password is](#) but you can never beat *this* horse too much.

Review of technology news finds that just about every week there are breaches in Internet security which expose user data to malicious intent. This month, the Massachusetts Attorney General was notified that some 1,800 residents' financial data was stolen via hackers.

Also this month, readers of Gawker Media sites such as Gizmodo and Lifehacker were compromised when hackers were able to infiltrate a large amount of data from Gawker's servers. While it is true that these users were at the mercy of the servers which held their data, there are numerous instances where you as the individual can protect yourself and your data from the prying eyes of hackers on the Internet. The best way to decrease your vulnerability is to properly implement and maintain secure passwords.

From the Gawker security breach, much can be learned about common passwords used on the Internet. These were the top ten passwords discovered in this breach:

123456
password
12345678
lifehack
qwerty
abc123
111111
monkey

Tech Tip: More Evidence for Password Maintenance

Written by Stephen

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consumer
12345

Do any of those passwords resemble passwords you use? If you answer yes, perhaps some change is in order. Here are some tips which can help you to improve your password security on the Internet:

Length

It is recommended to have passwords which are eight characters in length minimum and fourteen characters in length ideally.

Pitfalls To Avoid

Avoid using words in any language or words spelled backwards. Do not use repeated characters or sequences. Do not use personal information in your passwords. Do not use the same password for multiple online locations.

Complexity

Use full sentences with spaces in your passwords. Feel free to mix in numbers and change characters into numbers, such as substituting the dollar sign for the letter S. Use punctuation in your passwords. Use upper and lower-case letters.

Test Your Password

There are numerous sites which will allow you to input a password and it will provide feedback as to the strength of the password. Feel free to test out your passwords. Here is a site which will critique your passwords for you:

https://www.microsoft.com/protect/fraud/passwords/checker.aspx?WT.mc_id=Site_Link

Protect Your Password

Creating a secure password will do no good if you write it down on a piece of paper and tape it to your monitor. If you cannot remember your password, write it down and store it in a secure location, preferably not on your computer. The most secure location is your brain, so memorize any passwords you can.

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Change Your Passwords

Do not be afraid to change your passwords every sixty to ninety days, especially passwords which are most-critical, such as banking passwords.

To review these and other tips, feel free to visit these links:

<http://www.microsoft.com/nz/digitallife/security/create-strong-passwords.msp>

<http://www.microsoft.com/protect/fraud/passwords/create.aspx>

<http://www.microsoft.com/protect/fraud/passwords/secret.aspx>

For information about the security breach visit <http://blogs.wsj.com/digits/2010/12/13/the-top-5-0-gawker-media-passwords/>