

Password Protected

How to pick a secure, hard-to-crack password

By Brianna Snyder

We all know someone who's been hacked. You get a kooky e-mail from a friend that's formatted strangely, contains odd misspellings and usually invites you to open a link or an attachment. Many of us have learned what a "phishing" e-mail looks like — a bogus message that pretends to be from a friend, a social-media site or a bank — but even the savviest of us have been fooled.

What's the smartest thing you can do to ensure the security of your e-mail, social media and bank accounts? Be vigilant with your passwording. We did some research and talked to Cliff Rohde, of GoatCloud Communications in Albany, for some tips on managing passwords. The fundamental rule of passwords, though, is this: Use different passwords for every site. This is an annoying but necessary must-do.

The question is how to do it when we have to make passwords for everything and trying to remember 20 separate logins is not only a nuisance but nearly impossible. But using one password for everything is what gets a lot of people in trouble: Once your Gmail password is discovered, now your hijacker can access your Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and, heaven forbid, your bank account, too. Here are some suggestions:

1. AVOID WORDS

"If your password can be found in a dictionary, you might as well not have one," according to the *New York Times*. Hackers are in possession of fairly sophisticated programs that, in seconds, run through popular or likely words or terms you may have used in your password. They

don't even break into the system to see your password; they actually just guess. If your password is a mix of letters, numbers and characters, your chances of your password getting guessed are significantly lower.

2. IF YOU HAVE TO USE WORDS, USE A LOT OF THEM.

When picking a password, think deep. Think abstract. But also tie it to an off-line thing that's memorable. "Say, for instance, that this morning a squirrel stuck his head in a tin can on top of your garbage can," says Cliff Rohde. "Make a password that is something like 'squirrelonthegarbagecan-withatincanonhishead.'" That password is many characters but you'll also be able to remember it fairly easily.

3. MAKE A MNEMONIC

Farhad Manjoo writes in *Slate* that the phrase approach to password-making can be taken one step closer to tight security.

"Turn your phrase into an acronym," he writes. "Be sure to use some numbers and symbols and capital letters, too. *I like to eat bagels at the airport* becomes *lIteb@ta*, and *My first Cadillac was a real lemon so I bought a Toyota* is *M1stCwArlsIbaT*."

This approach is a good one if you're trying to manage several passwords across various sites. Manjoo continues: "You can even create pass phrases for specific sites that are coded with a hint about their purpose. A sentence like *It's 20 degrees in February, so I use Gmail* lets you set a new Gmail password every month and still never forget it: *i90diSsluG* for September, *i30diMsluG* for March, etc."

4. GET A PASSWORD MANAGER

Certain subscription services and free services will automatically generate passwords not even you know for all of your sites. You just remember the one master password to access the rest. Rohde uses Last Pass, which is free for desktop use but costs just \$12 a year for mobile security, too. "It's a very slick little piece of software," Rohde says. "What you do is you remember one password to log into Last Pass and then you kinda let Last Pass take over for you in terms of remembering passwords and password generation."

5. NEVER, EVER, EVER USE THE PASSWORD "PASSWORD."

"Never use the word 'password' as your password," Rohde says, "or never use 1-2-3-4 or something as simple as that because that's just the easiest thing. It doesn't take any computing power or brain power to try that." ●

Top 10 Most-Used Passwords (to be avoided)

10. "Baseball"
9. "111111"
8. "dragon"
7. "letmein"
6. "monkey"
5. "qwerty"
4. "abc123"
3. "12345678"
2. "123456"
1. "Password"

source: digitaljournal.com/article/335497

The story behind the story ... *from our contributors*

Read below about how our contributors learned new things while working on this month's edition of *Life@Home*.

Password Protected



Brianna Snyder

The other day I got an e-mail warning me someone from Germany had tried to log into my account and that I should

change my password immediately. And you know what? It's hard to just come up with a new password. So I did what Cliff Rohde at GoatCloud Communications suggested: I looked around and basically constructed an entire password from what I saw in my living room. Hopefully that'll keep the Germans out! See *Brianna's story on page 64*.



Luscious Lilacs ▲



Colleen Plimpton

For an all-around flowering shrub, not much beats the lilac. It possesses beauty, fragrance, critter resistance, food for butterflies, structure in the garden,

and if cultivars are chosen wisely, six weeks of color. See *Colleen's story on page 60*.

Feeling Pressure



John Adamian

Pressure cookers are amazing. Anybody who's spent any time preparing food in the kitchen has probably spent minutes and

hours fretting over the fact that things aren't cooking fast enough — you've got some ribs and you've got a dinner party, but you don't have time to get everything cooked in time. Pressure cookers don't necessarily solve all of those problems, but they're a great way of speeding up the cooking process. And if you eat a diet that's heavy on the legumes and the whole grains, then you really want to have a pressure cooker. See *John's story on page 82*.

Tax Time Blues



Ann Hughes

Document everything, and start doing it now. I never made a log of cash donations or miles I had driven to and

from volunteering my time to charitable organizations. They all add up, but not unless I write them down as the year goes on. See *Ann's story on page 62*.

Stovetop Trends



Cari Scribner

I can't look at my kitchen range now without thinking "clunky." I also re-learned a bit of high school chemistry lingo about the meaning of the word "ferrous."

See *Cari's story on page 39*.

Love Life



Jennifer Gish

Want to write a good love letter? Skip the "I love you." Like any good piece of writing, poets say you'll need to look for

sense-tickling descriptions and run from clichés. See *Jennifer's story on page 67*.

We asked ... *you answered* Here's what our readers said this month on Facebook.

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● **My least-favorite thing to clean is ...**

Julie: The litter box and refrigerator.

Shelley: Toilet.

Linda: Oven & refrigerator.

● **The worst part about a big snowstorm is ...**

Sue: The cleanup after.

Linda: All the hype preceding the storm!

● **If you could have one superpower, what would it be?**

Rachel: Remember when Samantha Stephens would wiggle her nose and then watch her house clean itself? That power. Big time.

Susan: I second Rachel. Wholeheartedly.

Brianna: Yeah I think a lot about Mary Poppins' similar superpower! I wish there was a superpower that would just make dinner appear out of nowhere, too, for nights when I'd rather kill myself than cook anything.

Merci: The power to make people love themselves.

Life@Home

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Island Life

Taking down walls
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Official Great Northeast Home Show Guide inside!

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Are your passwords secure?

◀ On the cover: Photo by Mark Samu

