

How to Pick a Secure Password

There are simple steps you can take to choose a secure password.

1. Be unconventional.

Avoid common words anyone can find in the dictionary, and simply adding numbers to common terms, like mainstreet12, isn't any better. Hackers write programs to crack these types of passwords first.

2. Stay impersonal.

Many people use birthdays, addresses or other personal info to make passwords memorable. Avoid anything that refers to your name, nickname, the name of a family member or pet and any personal numbers like phone numbers, addresses or other information.

3. Be complex.

The longer and more complicated your password is, the harder it is to guess. Include numbers, symbols and mixed-case letters. [Google suggests this technique](#): Create a phrase known only to you, and associate it with a particular website. A phrase for your email could be "My friends Tom and Jasmine send me a funny email once a day." Use numbers and letters to recreate it. "'MfT&Jsmafe1ad' is a password with lots of variations," notes Google.

4. Mix and match.

Do the same to create a unique password for every other password-protected site you visit. Choosing the same password for each of your online accounts is like using the same key to lock your home, car and office—if a criminal gains access to one, all of them are compromised," it says.

5. Change them up.

Passwords should be changed regularly to remain effective.

6. Put it to the test.

Online password checkers can evaluate a password's strength. Microsoft has a [password checker here](#).

8. Use common sense.

Internet habits are the key to password protection:

- **Never share your password with anyone.**
- **Don't post it out in the open.**
- **Don't fall for "phishing."** Never click on a link (even if it appears to be legit) that asks you to log in, change your password or provide any other personal information. It might be a phishing scam.