Be Cyber Secure: Password Protection
Tips to protect yourself, and how to respond if you think you have been targeted.

Your passwords are your first line of defense against cyber crime. If cyber criminals gain access to your passwords, they can take over your accounts, steal your identity and use your contacts to reach out to family and friends and steal their information too. Fortunately, there are simple password best practices to help keep you and your data safe from cyber criminals.

How to Protect Yourself

Be proactive:

• Use a password manager — a software program that stores your passwords in a single secure location accessible via a master password.

• Avoid writing down your passwords or storing them on your computer.

• Use unique passwords of at least eight characters for all of your accounts.

• Use multifactor authentication and enable biometric log-ins when possible.

• Lock mobile devices with a strong password or biometric protection and avoid all public, unsecure Wi-Fi networks.

• Use a unique pin number for tax submissions and government benefits.

If you suspect you’ve been targeted:

• Don’t delay. Act quickly if you think your passwords have been stolen, if you receive a changed password notification from providers, or if you are notified of unusual log in activity on any of your accounts.

• Call your bank and freeze financial and credit accounts.

• Freeze financial accounts that may be affected and inform credit bureaus.

• Call the police and file reports with the relevant local authorities.

• Document everything about the event. The more information you have, the better armed you will be to assist an investigation by your company, your bank and law enforcement officials, and the better prepared you will be against future events.

The Growing Threat, Measured

10% Number of IT managers who admit using “password” or “qwerty” as their password.¹

69% Number of people who reuse passwords across multiple accounts.²

<10% Number of active email accounts with a leading provider that use multifactor authentication.³

¹https://www.sailpoint.com/blog/world-password-day-2018/
²https://www.helpnetsecurity.com/2019/11/12/password-re-use-problem
³https://www.usenix.org/node/208154
Why It’s Important

Passwords are the gateways to your online life.

You use them to protect your email, your online bank accounts and your accounts at online retailers, as well as on dozens of other sites. Using an easy to guess password makes it easier for cyber criminals to gain access to those accounts and your personal information.

With your passwords and access to your social and financial accounts, cyber criminals can:

- **Transfer funds** out of your accounts or charge purchases to them.
- **Steal your identity** and claim your tax refund or government benefits.
- **Create a fake identity** with some of your information and use it to open a new credit card or apply for a loan.
- **Phish** using your email address or social media accounts to reach out to your contacts and convince them to share confidential information.

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