Password Safety & Security

The amount of online venues requiring passwords can seem endless. The list includes everything from your banking accounts, email, and Facebook account to photo sharing platforms, online grocery offers, blogs, and your home computer accounts (including the administrator settings). Keeping these accounts private is extremely important because even innocuous accounts like a photo or coupon co-op can contain basic information like age and email address–which could be used by a hacker to find more personal information.

Password security is one of the most important skills in online safety. If parents make password security an important priority, they will be able to protect their own information while helping their children learn to safely manage their own accounts.

CHOOSING A PASSWORD

- 10-14 characters is ideal.

- Use as many kinds of characters as possible, include numerals, symbols, upper-case letters, lower-case letters, and punctuation.

- When choosing a password, use mnemonic devices to help you remember it. For example, create a password which is really an acronym for a sentence (include punctuation/symbols and numerals in this acronym): o "My daughter, Hayley, is a great tennis player" becomes "Md,h,=gr8tP".
o "I love singing in the rain every single day!" becomes "I<3SitR364!"

- Never use any personal identifying information in the password. This includes names, birthdates, pets, street addresses, schools, phone numbers, license plate numbers, etc. These will be first guesses for anyone trying to gain access to your account.
- Check password strength here and here.

For children:

Even though it may seem difficult to help children create safe passwords, its important to begin teaching password security principles as soon as they begin using the computer.

Help your children choose acronyms that originate from rhymes or favorite song lyrics and find creative ways to include numerals and symbols. If they participate in the process, it will be easier for them to remember the password.

DON'T USE"ALL-PURPOSE" PASSWORDS

Resist the temptation to use one password for all your online or computer-related accounts. Parents who use the same password for every account set themselves up for easy infiltration–from strangers, but also from children (who may want to hack into the admin settings and change them to allow certain restricted activities or hack into your iTunes account to purchase their favorite new albums).

If you have several online accounts, consider using at least 3 different passwords–but, one password for each account is ideal. Using multiple passwords will minimize the damage if one account is infiltrated.

For children:

Teach your children how to keep track of their online accounts. Depending on their age and maturity level, you will probably have limits on what online platforms they use (e.g. social media, gaming, learning sites, photo sharing). Have them keep a list of which online platforms they use with a keyword to help them remember their password. Keep this list locked in a safe place.

KEEP PASSWORDS PRIVATE

The best way to keep passwords private is to remember them. If you forget your password, most account services can email a reset link. To ensure this process works properly, make sure you use an active email address when you register for accounts.

If you choose to keep your own list of passwords, we recommend using keywords to remind yourself of the password. Don't associate these key words with any specific account–again, use a code name. Keep the list locked in a secure place (preferably away from the computer)– You don't want the list to announce itself as connected with the computer or containing passwords.

For children:

Discuss often the importance of never giving out passwords to friends at school or even siblings. Keep their passwords & accounts in a secure place.

CHANGE PASSWORDS FREQUENTLY

It's a good idea to change passwords at least once a year, or anytime you suspect an account has been compromised.

For children:

To ensure everyone in the family is periodically updating their passwords, consider making password-change a family event. This activity would allow you to review password security with everyone in the family, and it would provide a good opportunity to review which household members are using which kinds of online venues

Fitzsimons

A PARTNERING CREDIT UNION

FitzsimonsCU.com | (303) 340-3343