

# Protect Your Passwords

Contributed by Ben Azaraev  
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How should we protect our passwords and secret key words?

Use strong passwords that combine upper and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols. Example of a strong password: Mp!5551212. Example of a weak password: benjamin

Use a strong password that you can remember, so that you don't have to write it down, this article will provide some examples and ideas.

Here are some reasons to protect your password and what can happen if someone steals your passwords?

- Hacker can login to your email and request private information from your contacts or
- Authorize payment or
- Approve password changes to the shopping sites or
- Send nasty emails to people using you emails contact list or
- If you have the same passwords on more than one web site, phone voicemail and emails or
- Hacker will have your identity, and access your online banking account.

## Steps to Protect Your Password

If you write your password on a piece of paper or save it in an electronic form; this would mean website, internet, PDA, etc., the following steps below will provide precautions and help you create a password that can only be read & understood by you. Create passwords dictionary using personal code words or patterns that you can easily decode. In choosing your passwords, try to mix Upper/Low case characters, numbers, and special characters like '&#39;' and '&#34;', etc. Never use words which can be found in any dictionary, in any language. Never use names.

Example, code words:

- '&#3E;' stands for the first 3 letters of my street name '&#34;elm&#34;';
- '&#3D;' stands for dash '&#34;-&#34;' (or you can use '&#3D;' for minus)
- '&#3A;' stands for my dogs (Junior&#39;s) birthday date '&#34;20060130&#34;';
- '&#3S;' stands for my sister&#39;s home phone number '&#34;5551212&#34;'; it can be with area code, or last 2 digits, etc.
- '&#3E;' stands for Edward&#39;s mobile number '&#34;5555555&#34;';
- I will write down on the paper my password '&#3D;'&#39;, which I can decode to: '&#34;elm-20060130&#34;';
- My yahoo email password '&#3D;'&#39;, now you try to decode the password: \_\_\_\_\_, If you decoded as '&#34;elm-5551212&#34;'; you are correct

Where do I save my passwords? You can write it anywhere, I save my passwords in the Excel spreadsheet using all my own secret code words, Example: I will write Yahoo Email user name=&#39;myyahoosname@yahoo.com&#39; and password=&#39;3Dj&#39;;

- To take it a step further you may use code words for account names to make it harder for a hacker to break into your account. For example, my yahoo email user name is my name plus birth year '&#39;BenAzar1969&#39;'; my secret code words will be '&#39;fly&#39;'; First-Name, Last-Name, and Year.
- Document with coded words may be printed and held in your wallet, it will be very hard for hacker to understand.
- For the passwords provided by systems which you can&#39;t change, try to be more creative by hiding the destination and account name. In the example above which describes Yahoo email, I will give a code name to Yahoo email, and not mention yahoo anywhere. Example: Sentence to remind me of yahoo name: '&#39;fly&#39;'; and password: 3Dj Additional steps can be taken to protect the file where the passwords are kept. Encrypt the folder or file where the passwords reside. This method will not protect the file from technology gurus, but it will protect it from less experienced hackers. Below are recommendations on how to encrypt the folder: Folder, File encryption and most up to date firewall, will provide a first line of defense against unauthorized access to your computer.

If you store sensitive or confidential data on your PC it's a good idea to get encryption software. Windows 2000, 2003 and XP Professional (excluding the XP Home edition) have built-in encryption utility for files and folders.

To Encrypt folder

- Double-click on 'My Computer' to open Windows Explorer.
- Choose the folder you want to encrypt and right-click on it.
- In the window that comes up, select 'Properties' and click on the 'Advanced' button.

- Select 'Encrypt contents to secure data' check box, and click OK.
- Click OK again. It may take a little time depending on the size of the folder for a system to encrypt all the files in the folder. It is a good idea to create a separate folder where you keep your confidential information, do not name it something that will trigger curiosity from the hacker. Example: don't call it the password file or folder.

#### To Encrypt files

- Choose the file you want to encrypt and right-click on it.
- In the window that comes up, select 'Properties' and click on the 'Advanced' button
- Here, select the 'Encrypt contents to secure data' check box, and click OK
- Click OK again.
- Another dialog box will appear with a following 2 questions:

1. Encrypt the File and the parent folder

2. Encrypt the File only

- Choose 2nd option Encrypt File only and click OK. It may take a little time depending on the size of the file. You may have a different version of the Operating Systems then (XP, Vista, Win 2003, etc), the options may vary

#### The Do's and Don'ts

##### The Do's:

- Use more than 7 characters for your password.
- Mix Upper & Low case characters, numbers, and symbols like; ! - \_ @ & # \$ % \*
- Substitute letter or words with numbers and vice versa, example: my password elm-20060130 I will substitute 0 with 'o' and 'l' with '1', e1m-2006o13o
- Encode you passwords when writing or saving them, see example above
- Save all your websites in your browser favorites for easy access.

##### The Don'ts:

- Don't give your password or personal information to anyone; if you do, people may break your code. If you use the same code for all passwords, that may be dangerous. If you must give your password first change it to something easy to remember like the person's name + age who is borrowing your password and change it back when returned
- Don't use dictionary words (of any language)
- Don't use your name, birthday, address, tax id, personal information, etc.
- Don't write or save your passwords in clear text
- Don't use 123456, 654321, all same numbers, etc.
- Don't save non encoded passwords on any Password store software
- Validate the website before inputting your password into the password box. To validate: check the URL example: www.yahoo.com and not www.wwwyahoo.com or any other name and IP address example: 102.###..... Open a browser and manually enter URL or web address, to any website where you would input your personal information. Do not use links provided by someone else via email, etc.

Please forward your feedback to [bazaraev@gmail.com](mailto:bazaraev@gmail.com)