

Tip of the Month April, 2012

Choosing a Good Password

Choosing the right password is something that many people find difficult, there are so many things that require passwords these days that remembering them all can be a real problem. Perhaps because of this a lot of people choose their passwords very badly. The simple tips below are intended to assist you in choosing a good password.

Basics

- Use at least eight characters, the more characters the better really, but most people will find anything more than about 15 characters difficult to remember.
- Use a random mixture of characters, upper and lower case, numbers, punctuation, spaces and symbols.
- Don't use a word found in a dictionary, English or foreign,
- Never use the same password twice.

Things to avoid

- Don't just add a single digit or symbol before or after a word. e.g. "apple 1"
- Don't double up a single word. e.g. "appleapple"
- Don't simply reverse a word. e.g. "elppa"
- Don't just remove the vowels. e.g. "ppl"
- Key sequences that can easily be repeated. e.g. "qwerty," "asdf" etc.

Tips

- Choose a password that you can remember so that you don't need to keep looking it up, this reduces the chance of somebody discovering where you have written it down.
- Choose a password that you can type quickly, this reduces the chance of somebody discovering your password by looking over your shoulder.

Bad Passwords

- Don't use passwords based on personal information such as: name, nickname, birthdate, wife's name, pet's name, friends name, home town, phone number, national insurance number, car registration number, address etc. This includes using just part of your name, or part of your birthdate.
- Don't use passwords based on things located near you. Passwords such as "computer," "monitor," "keyboard," "telephone," "printer," etc. are useless.
- Don't ever be tempted to use one of those oh so common passwords that are easy to remember but offer no security at all. e.g. "password," "letmein."
- Never use a password based on your username, account name, computer name or email address.

Choosing a Password

- Use good password generator software
- Use the first letter of each word from a line of a song or poem
- Alternate between one consonant and one or two vowels to produce nonsense words. e.g. "taupouti."
- Choose two short words and concatenate them together with a punctuation or symbol character between the words. e.g. "seat%tree."

Changing Your Password

- You should change your password regularly, I suggest once a month is reasonable for most purposes.
- You should also change your password whenever you suspect that somebody knows it, or even that they may guess it, perhaps they stood behind you while you typed it in.
- Remember, don't re-use a password.

Protecting Your Password

- Never store your password on your computer except in an encrypted form. Note that the password cache that comes with windows

(.pwlfiles) is **NOT** secure, so whenever windows prompts you to “Save password” don’t.

- Don’t tell anyone your password, not even your systems administrator.
- Never send your password via email or other unsecured channel.
- Yes, write your password but don’t leave the paper lying around, lock the paper away somewhere, preferably off-site and definitely under lock and key.
- Be very careful when entering your password with somebody else in the same room.

Remembering your Password

Remembering your password is always difficult and because of this many people are tempted to write them down on bits of paper. As mentioned above this is a very bad idea. So what can you do? Choose passwords that are creative but are also easy to remember.

Good luck and remember “**Privacy is the best Policy!**”

For more information on this and any other data protection concern you may have, please email us at dataprotection@bahamas.gov.bs or visit our website www.bahamas.gov.bs/dataprotection.