

Guidelines for General Password Construction

Information Technology Services

Poor, weak passwords have the following characteristics:

- The password contains less than ten characters.
- The password is a word found in a dictionary (English or foreign).
- The password is a common usage word such as:
 - Names of family, pets, friends, co-workers, fantasy characters, etc.
 - Computer terms and names, commands, sites, companies, hardware, software.
 - The words “UNK”, “Kearney”, or any derivation.
 - Birthdays and other personal information such as addresses and phone numbers.
 - Word or number patterns like aaabbb, qwerty, zyxwvuts, 123321, etc.
 - Any of the above spelled backwards.
 - Any of the above preceded or followed by a digit (e.g. secret1, 1secret).

Strong passwords have the following characteristics:

- The password contains both upper and lower case alphabetic characters (e.g. a-z, A-Z)
- The password has numeric digits and special/punctuation characters as well as letters (e.g. 0-9, 1234567890_+\";:<>,./?)
- The password is at least ten alphanumeric characters long.
- The password is not a word in any language, slang, dialect, jargon, etc.
- The password is not based on personal information, names of family, etc.
- Passwords should never be written down or stored on-line, unless an on-line password manager with a strongly encrypted database is used. Try to create passwords that can be easily remembered. One way to do this is create a password based on a song title, affirmation, or other phrase. For example, the phrase might be “This May Be One Way To Remember” and the password could be “TmB1w2R!” or “Tmb1w>r” or some other variation.

Note: Do not use either of these examples as passwords!

History

Original – 2009

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