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Factsheet

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PASSWORDS – What makes a good password?

Passwords are often a pain, but we are all required to use them to gain access to numerous online accounts and to keep our information secure. However, the consequences of our passwords getting into the wrong hands can be disastrous. In this factsheet we look at some of the mistakes made when setting up a password and some techniques to make your passwords safer.

There are a number of simple mistakes made when choosing a password - here are the top three:

1. **Using just a word**. Don't use a dictionary name. It takes seconds for a hacker to run through all the words in the dictionary. Just adding a number won't help either!

2. **Using the same password for different accounts**. Every time you register your email address and password on a website, you're broadcasting that information to the database owner. Databases get hacked. Suddenly your email account is compromised.

3. **Using a really complicated password**. It's impossible to crack, but also impossible for you to remember so of course you write it down. We've seen offices that insist on complicated passwords and then employees put yellow stickers next to the PC with the password written on.

If you'd like to stay safe or safer, then maybe apply the following.

- Use a unique password for your email account. Don't duplicate that password elsewhere. EVER.
- Have an easy password for websites where you don't enter any payment details. It's ok to use the same password on multiple sites for these.
- Think of a system where you can use different passwords for different sites and still easily remember them.

Here is a system that you could try, or a variation of it.

- Think of a word that you'll remember. EG: Glasgow.
- Now "De-word" it. EG: Glas£!gow We've added £! in the middle. The £ sign is good as it's a UK character.
- Use the above password for your email account.
- Now use a different name, but with the same "De-word". EG Bri£!stol.. This is your "not that bothered" password.
- Now for each website when you want a unique, secure password, just add a letter from the website address. Maybe choose the second letter. So your Ebay password becomes Bri£!stolb.

We are always happy to offer any advice and assistance that you might need in reviewing your online security or any other IT issue you may have. Please telephone us on 01392 435803 if you need to discuss any issue in more detail.

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