

Help Yourself to Strong Passwords

Are you using weak passwords?

Imperva, a California data security company, analyzed the 32 million passwords exposed by a social networking site hacker. The analysis revealed that people still make use of weak passwords, at least on that particular site. Almost 500,000 people used either “12345,” “123456,” or “123456789.” Another nearly 62,000 people used “password” as their password. It’s not too surprising to learn that this phenomenon is widespread, and has led some sites to block the use of extremely common letter and/or number combinations as passwords.

Perhaps it is simply human nature to make convenience a priority when choosing a password. However, you must develop a password that is an effective security mechanism or you defeat the purpose of having one.

Consider the following tips:

1. Avoid the simple, widely-used choices for passwords such as those previously mentioned. The other passwords in the list of the top ten discovered in that analysis were: “iloveyou,” “princess,” “rockyou,” “1234567,” “12345678,” and “abc123.”
2. Avoid the use of dictionary words as passwords. Passwords that are real words are at risk to brute force attacks which is a way a hacker can discover your password.
3. Use a combination of characters—uppercase letters, lower case letters, numbers, and special characters. According to Imperva’s report, passwords of at least 8 characters are recommended.
4. Change your passwords periodically.
5. Use different passwords for different accounts and/or websites. If the password for one system is exposed or obtained by unauthorized users, they might be able to access other sensitive personal accounts.