

# Secure Your Passwords

The internet connects us to a lot of useful services. We now shop, bank, and manage accounts like Social Security online. Many of us keep documents and records on remote servers in the cloud. With all of these conveniences comes risk, and we want to protect ourselves from those with bad intent who might harm us should they gain access to our accounts or sensitive information.

There are a number of things that we can do to protect our online selves. In this post, we'll start with the most basic and common security protection, passwords. We all use them and to make them most effective there are a few rules we should follow.

1. Use strong passwords or pass phrases. The [best passwords](#) are long (twelve characters minimum, the longer the better), random, and don't use words in the dictionary. They should be unpredictable, so don't use anniversaries, birthdates, or other information associated with you.
2. Don't reuse passwords. Each login or account should have its own unique password.
3. Store your passwords in a secure place.
4. Don't share passwords with others.
5. Change your passwords regularly.
6. Use [multifactor authentication](#) wherever it is available.

If you are going to follow this advice, you'll see rather quickly that relying on memorization for your passwords would be daunting at the least. But passwords don't need to be memorized. Writing them down on paper is one solution but not recommended since others can find it or if it is misplaced you can be locked out of your accounts. You can keep them recorded in an electronic note or spreadsheet on your computer but you'll need to keep those safe by protecting them with [encryption](#) and a password.

The best solution to keeping track of your passwords is to use a password manager. This allows you to use unique, complex, long passwords and have them readily available to you wherever you need to use them. Cybersecurity experts commonly recommend password managers as the best way to keep your data secure.

There are many password managers around, some free and even modern browsers have some form of password management built in. Paid managers offer more convenience - they can work across devices, browsers, and operating systems - along with additional services. Some have family plans that allow you and your family members to share credentials for accounts you share. Most are affordable and worthwhile for the convenience and security they provide.

The password manager I use, [1Password](#), informs me of sites I use that have had a data breach which alerts me to change my password right away. I use it to store sensitive documents and things I may want to have quick access to while away from home, like medical power of attorney and healthcare information. Having everything in one place would make it easy for a trusted

person to manage my accounts should I suddenly be unable to do so, since they would have access to my logins and passwords along with other important information.

The escalation of [phishing attacks](#) and [security breaches](#) on the internet has made it essential to take online security seriously. Members of our own Meeting have been the victims of such attacks, so this is a real concern for all of us. Good passwords and secure management of them may not mitigate every risk but would be a good first step in keeping your data secure.

Here are some links for further information about password security and using a password manager:

AARP: 5 Ways to Build Better Passwords

<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/personal-technology/info-2023/build-better-passwords.html>

AARP: Why Experts Say Everyone Should Be Using a Password Manager

<https://www.aarp.org/home-family/personal-technology/info-2021/use-a-password-manager-for-online-security.html>

Consumer Reports: Everything You Need to Know About Password Managers

<https://www.consumerreports.org/electronics/digital-security/everything-you-need-to-know-about-password-managers-a5624939418/>

The Wirecutter: The Best Password Managers

<https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/reviews/best-password-managers/>

For more information about how to protect yourself from cybercrime, visit

<https://milwaukeequakers.org/cybersecurity/>