LA COUNTY LIBRARY

DIY Library Program

ADULT 101: SOCIAL MEDIA AND CYBERSMARTS

CREATING A STRONG PASSWORD

Recommended for Ages 12 – 18

We all have to take measures to stay safe online. One of those measures is password protection. Our email, social media accounts, and gaming websites require us to create passwords to use them. As more of our personal information is shared online, hackers and cybercriminals become more sophisticated. How do you know if your password is strong enough? This program will teach you all about the purpose of a password, so you can make informed choices when you set yours. As a bonus, you'll learn a fun "hack" to create a strong password that is difficult for someone else to guess but easy for you to work out.

Questions for Discussion:

- What is the purpose of a password?
- How is a password different from any other word?
- What immediately comes to mind when you're creating a password?

The term "password" is misleading because it implies that what you are creating is a *word.* The problem with words (like *cat or dog*) is that they make sense. When words make sense, they can be guessed, and hackers and cybercriminals are great guessers.

refrigerator vs. fdsydiwyu

Notice that "refrigerator" is a recognizable word that can be imagined and uttered out loud while "fdsydiwyu" is *nonsensical.* It's just a combination of letters. A password is just that: a combination of letters, numbers, and sometimes symbols that protect your personal information from strangers. The more *nonsensical* your password is, the harder it is for hackers to guess.

Activity: Practice making passwords

Write down a few *nonsensical* letter/number combinations that could serve as your password.

- What do you notice?

- Can you memorize them?

If your practice passwords are *nonsensical* like they should be, you might be wondering how you're supposed to remember them. The following activity is a technique that makes your *nonsensical* password make sense to you.

Activity: Create a password using a code phrase from a book.

Step 1: Find a memorable quote or phrase from your favorite book, or write your own. Try to keep it to around ten words.
Ex: "Fear doesn't shut you down; it wakes you up." —from *Divergent,* by Veronica Roth

Step 2: Underline the first letters of each word in your phrase or quote; then write them out.
Ex: "**F**ear **d**oesn't **s**hut **y**ou **d**own; **i**t **w**akes **y**ou **u**p"→ fdsydiwyu

Step 3: Identify the verbs or nouns in your phrase, and put the first letters in uppercase. Or, just make the last letter upper case.

Ex: "fear doesn't **S**hut you down: it **W**akes you up" → fdSydiWyu or fdsydiwyU

Step 4: Write down a date you can easily remember, like your best friend or close relative's birthday.

Ex: Allison's birthday is on October 9 = 10-09

Step 5: Combine your mixed case phrase acronym and date, and you have just created your strong password!

Ex: fdSydiWyu10-09

Step 6: For reference, write down your code for your password, but not the password itself. Your code is *how* you determined your password. If you know the code to your password, you can work it out logically instead of trying to guess from memory.

Ex: Quote from favorite book, uppercase verbs, bestie's bday (this is your key to figuring out your password in case you forget).

Tip: You can always adjust your code to make your password simpler or more complex. The goal is for it to make sense to you but not to a stranger.

***Activity adapted from *Pogue's Basics: Life: Essential Tips and Shortcuts (That No One Bothers to Tell You) For Simplifying Your Day* by David Pogue.**

Recap (3 things to remember about passwords):

1. Passwords are a combination of letters, numbers, and symbols designed to protect your private information from others.

2. Passwords should appear *nonsensical.*

3. Never share your password with anyone except your parent/adult caregiver.

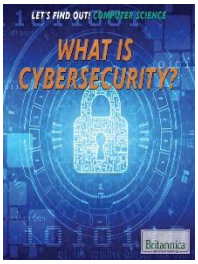
DIGITAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE THROUGH LA COUNTY LIBRARY

eBooks & Audiobooks

LA County Library offers numerous resources that can help you learn more about social media and cybersmarts. Here are just a few, all of which are available as eBooks on OverDrive and Libby:

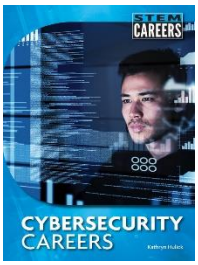
Ethical Hacker **by Virginia Loh-Hagan**

Ethical hacking is legally breaking into computers and devices to test an organization's defenses. Learn about this unique job in this entry of the Odd Jobs series.



What is Cybersecurity **by Haq Kamar**

This book will introduce readers to different types of online threats, including viruses and malware. Readers will learn how different dangers spread and some basic steps to stop or prevent them.

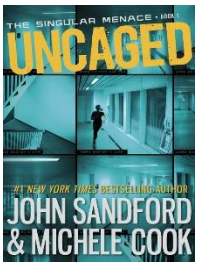


Cybersecurity Careers **by Kathryn Hulick**

Comments from people in the industry, current statistics and forecasts, and realistic descriptions provide a useful look at jobs ranging from cybersecurity engineers to incident handlers to white hat hackers.

Phantom Wheel **by Tracy Deebs**

Believing they were being recruited by the CIA, Issa, Harper, and Owen are conned by a multibillion-dollar tech company into creating the ultimate computer virus, capable of hacking anyone on Earth, anywhere, at any time. Horrified by what they've done, these hackers must team up to stop the virus before the world descends into chaos.



Uncaged **by John Sandford and Michele Cook**

When an animal rights action at a research lab goes wrong, a terrible secret is exposed, and Shay must find her brother Odin before the researchers at Singular Corp can silence both of them

Databases

- *Opposing Viewpoints* features essays, articles, and primary sources on contemporary social issues. In the database, click on “View All” on the Science, Technology, and Ethics Tab. There are many relevant topics to choose from, including: Cyberbullying, Cybercrime, Cyberpredators, Digital Media, Hacking and Hackers, Internet, Social Media, Technology and Society, and Twitter.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- http://www.nationalcac.org/internet-safety-tips
- http://www.nsteens.org
- http://www.safeteens.com
- http://kidshealth.org/teen/safety/safebasics/internet_safety.html