

## CREATING STRONG PASSWORDS

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### AUDIENCE

This document is for UAHuntsville faculty, staff and students,

### WEAK PASSWORD PROBLEMS

There are some common password selection practices to avoid.

#### USING THE SAME PASSWORD EVERYWHERE

For the sake of convenience, some people will use the same password for each of their online authenticated applications, including email, facebook, banking, etc. This is very risky; if your password gets cracked then the hacker will have access to all of your accounts. Is the convenience of a single password worth risking your financial security?

#### USING SIMPLE OR COMMON PASSWORDS

The following are examples of weak passwords.

- A password that can be found in the dictionary -- computer hackers run tools that use common dictionary words to hack these passwords first
- Numbers and letters in the order that they appear on the keyboard (example 1234, QWERTY)
- Your name, a family member's name, a pet's name, or your city of birth

### STRONG PASSWORD SOLUTIONS

When you are selecting a password, use a string of text that mixes both numbers, letters that are both upper and lower case, and special characters. Use a minimum of 8 characters, the more the better. Remember, the longer the password then the stronger it is. Every 60 to 90 days, it is recommended that you change all your passwords. Even if the password is strong, you might have shared it with a co-worker or boyfriend/girlfriend.

#### METHOD FOR CREATING COMPLEX PASSWORDS

One way to create and remember a strong password is to use an acronym from a phrase that you can easily remember, such as "I really love going to the movies and eating popcorn!" By adding capital letters, numbers for easily substituted letters (1 for i or l, 3 for E, 0 for o, etc.), and punctuation or symbols, this sentence might represent the strong password "Irlglttm&3p!" that is easy to remember by recalling the phrase.

## PASSWORD GENERATORS

If you don't want to create your own complex passwords, then there are several good password generators on the Internet, such as [PC Tools Secure Password Generator](#). This generator allows you to select the length of the password and the rules (mixed case, alphanumeric, special characters, etc.) that will be included in the generated password. It additionally provides the option to exclude similar characters (e.g. i, l, o, 1, 0, l) so if you write it down (and store it away from your computer) you won't be left wondering if it is a zero or a capital O.

## PASSWORD TESTING

If you want to check how strong your current password is, then check it at [How Secure is My Password?](#) This site will show you how long it will take to crack your password using the average computer.

## UAHUNTSVILLE PASSWORD SERVICES

i.t.solutions provides a password change utility called the [ITS User Services Portal](#) that allows you to change your Charger ID password and/or your Google Apps password. Change your Banner ID password at [register.uah.edu](#). These utilities will allow you to create stronger passwords.