CyberSmart!
21st century skills for education

MANAGING PASSWORDS

HOW STRONG IS YOUR PASSWORD?

Take this quiz. Give yourself 10 points to start. Add or subtract points as you answer each question.

Your score

	Yes	No	10
1. Does your password have eight or more characters?	+2	0	
2. Does your password include letters, numerals, and symbols?	+2	0	
3. Does your password include both uppercase and lowercase letters?	+2	0	
4. Have you changed your password in the last six months?	+2	0	
5. Does your password include words found in a dictionary from any language?	-1	0	
6. Does your password include obvious sequences of numbers (such as 123) or letters (xyz)?	-1	0	
7. Does your password contain repeated characters (such as 3333333)?	-1	0	
8. Does your password use three or more keys on your keyboard in sequence (such as qwe or xcv)?	-1	0	
9. Does your password use private identity information about you (such as your logon name, your street address, or your birth date)?	-1	0	
10. Do you use this password for any other online accounts?	-1	0	
Final score from line 10			

SCORING

18 points: Top score—excellent job!

13–17 points: Not bad, but pay attention!

5–12 points: It could be worse.

4 points: Worst score. It's time to change all your passwords!

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GET THE FACTS

What do passwords do?

Passwords have three functions.
- They control who can get information.
- They control who can change information.
- They are used to prove you are who you say you are.

Be CyberSmart!

- Don't keep written copies of your passwords near your computer.
- Never share passwords with other people.
- Don't use personal information in passwords, such as the name of your boyfriend or girlfriend, your pet's name, or your phone number.
- Use a password and keypad lock features on your cell phone. This will stop others from using or looking through your phone without your permission.
- Don't use the same password for all accounts.

Who wants your passwords?

You'd be surprised. Your little brother might try to get into your online gaming account. Another teen might try to cause trouble for you or just play a "joke" by impersonating you on a social networking site. Career criminals guess or crack passwords for a living. Once criminals gain access to your private identity information, they can sell it to the highest bidder.

How do people crack passwords?

There are free programs on the Internet that crack passwords by trying every word in the dictionary. Serious hackers write their own password-cracking software. Someone you know might try using information they know about you, such as the name of your pet or your address.

How do people steal passwords?

No matter how strong your password is, it can still be stolen or copied. Someone can look over your shoulder when you are at school or at the library and see the keys you type. There are programs that keep track of which keys you used when you last typed at a computer in a public place, such as a library. Others steal passwords by *phishing*. Criminals go phishing when they send e-mails and other messages to people asking for private identity information. The message may ask you to verify a bank account number, password, or your Social Security number. Often the e-mail will contain a link to a Web site that may look exactly like a real business, but it's not. Check the URL against a version you know to be correct. If it looks "fishy," don't take that bait!

Build a better password!

Create passwords that are easy for you to remember but that will be hard for others to crack. Start with a memorable phrase or sentence (but not one you say every day!). Then change some letters into numerals, symbols, or spaces. Use the other hints from Student Sheet 1.

Activity: Practice creating passwords from these three phrases. Then use Student Sheet 1 to tally the strength of each password.

1. How much is that doggy in the window?

_____ Points: _____

2. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

_____ Points: _____

3. I love Grandpa Edgar and Grandma Rosa.

_____ Points: _____