What does a good, strong password look like?

Password Security: treat your password like your toothbrush!

Online safety is a huge subject area, which is why you see so much emphasis, but as in real life there are a few basic but very important principles that, if we all adhere to them, will go a long way to keeping us, our children and our data safe.

One of these principles is passwords. A historic message that is told to younger children is to treat your password like your toothbrush: keep it to yourself and change it often! In principle that sounds very simple but what does a good, strong password look like?

The industry standard for years has been at least 8 characters (letters & numbers) which should be a mixture of upper and lowercase.

Some sites won't allow you to access their services unless you have a horrendously complicated password. Can you imagine if you had to do this for every single site you use? Have you ever counted up how many passwords you use? Would you even want to?

There's a fairly good chance that if you have to use lots of different sites and services, you're using the same password across some of them.

Guidance on password usage is starting to change, telling us that the old advice is bad advice. The trouble is, if you have to change your password often, there's a good chance you just make a small change to your existing password.

In these modern tech times, one of the very best ways is to use a password manager. This creates all your passwords for you, and then stores them in an app which you access with a single, very strong password.

It's really important that children learn these fundamentals from a young age so it

might be a good idea to go through with them the sites and services they use. Do they use the same passwords? Do they change them often? Are they easy to remember and therefore easy to compromise?

Creating Strong Passwords

Use a different password for each of your important accounts, like your email and online banking accounts. Re-using passwords is risky. If someone figures out your password for one account, that person could potentially gain access to your email, address, and even your money.

Using numbers, symbols and mix of upper and lower case letters in your password makes it harder for someone to guess your password. For example, an eight-character password with numbers, symbols and mixed-case letters is harder to guess because it has 30,000 times as many possible combinations than an eight-character password with only lower case letters.

Create a unique password that's unrelated to your personal information and uses a combination of letters, numbers, and symbols. Don't use simple words or phrases like "password" or "letmein", keyboard patterns such as "qwerty" or "qazwsx", or sequential patterns such as "abcd1234" which make your password easier to guess.

Tips to help keep them safe

Talking to your child is one of the best ways to keep them safe. You can also use parental controls on social networks, online games and browsers and on both hardware and software that can filter or monitor what your child can see.

Preventing your children from using the internet or mobile phones won't keep them safe in the long run, so it's important to have conversations that help your child understand how to stay safe and what to do if they ever feel scared or uncomfortable.

Talking about…Instagram Minimum age: 13+

Instagram is a picture and video sharing app. Users can post content and use hashtags to share experiences, thoughts or memories with an online community. You can follow your friends, family, celebrities and even companies on Instagram.

NSPCC joined forces with O2 to find out what young people and parents of 8-12 year olds think about Instagram. 29% of the children and young people asked think Instagram can be risky. The top 3 concerns were: strangers, lack of privacy and inappropriate content. The top 3 reasons why children and young people liked Instagram were: you can share with others, you can communicate with others and you can follow others.

Parents say: it's easy for a child aged 11 to register. "All you needed was an email address, and most kids have their own email addresses." Parents also say: it's not easy to find out how to report or block and it's not easy to find out if the site is moderated. "I spent about 10 minutes searching the app and couldn't find out anything about how to report." With regard to privacy, parents say: it's quite easy to find out how to change privacy settings. "Privacy settings are good and easy to find."

You can find more information by visiting www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/instagram/

MINECRAFT

If you don't know your creepers from your griefers, that's okay. We're here to help you keep children safe from the risks they might face.

Griefers

The villains. Griefers are human players that intentionally set out to destroy or steal things that other players have built or collected. Griefers can act individually or as a team, entering public multi-player servers with the aim of wreaking as much havoc as possible.

Creepers

Creepers are characters that exist within the game but aren't controlled by other players. No less annoying than the 'Griefer', their only objective is to cause as much destruction as possible. They do this by exploding next to players and damaging anything nearby.

Nether

The dark underworld of the game. Players can build and enter a portal to the Nether. There are some darker elements and it isn't suitable for young players, as it's filled with more dangerous characters and hazards.

Whitelist

Like an invite list to your child's birthday party, a Whitelist lets moderators create a community that only includes people who have been verified to join. It won't remove the risk, but can reduce the chance of bumping into someone who may spoil the fun.

The Risks and Staying Safe

Top concerns for children when playing Minecraft are: bullying, talking to strangers, hacking and downloading viruses. They may also come across inappropriate content like violent or sexual language and images.

To help keep children safe on Minecraft, make sure: you know where they're playing, they're using appropriate safety settings and you talk to them about what to do if they see anything upsetting.

Top Tips for Staying Safe

Turn off chat: In the multiplayer mode of Minecraft children can chat with people they meet. But there's no way of knowing who they are. So turning off the chat function can help make sure younger children don't talk to strangers. To do this: click 'options', select multiplayer settings, click on chat, choose shown, hidden or commands only.

Find a child friendly server: A server is a single world or place in the game. There are lots of child-friendly servers that have been set up to help families and children to play Minecraft safely. They have strict rules on language and behaviour and are often moderated by parents.

Watch out for viruses and malware: Viruses and malware may be downloaded by buying illegal versions of Minecraft or additional 'mods' (add-ons that change the content or gameplay of Minecraft).
Always make sure that you only download Minecraft from the official website. And ask your children to tell you before downloading anything new.

Set time limits: Children often find Minecraft so much fun that they lose track of time. There's no end to the game, so talk openly about setting weekly and daily time limits as part of your family agreement. You could also ask them to show you their Minecraft world.

NetAware

The NetAware app is a simple guide for parents to the most popular social networks, apps and games that children use, produced by the NSPCC.

You can easily find age ratings, parent and child reviews and how likely it is that a child could find inappropriate content. Download the app today for mobile devices, so you'll always have help keeping children safe online wherever you go.

How Minecraft Works - Different Modes

In Minecraft, when you start a new game there are 3 main modes: Creative, Adventure and Survival.

Creative: Players can do anything, monsters can't attack them and it's impossible for your character to die. This is the safest mode and is great for younger players to get used to the game before they move on to the other levels.

Adventure: Players can't break any blocks, but can kill monsters and animals, or be killed by monsters.
Survival: Players must survive against monsters and hunger. But the monsters can be turned off by pressing escape, going into settings and turning the difficulty to 'peaceful'.

REPORTING ONLINE SAFETY CONCERNS

Visit your child's school website for advice and support including how to report online safety concerns:

www.heathfld.bham.sch.uk, www.princealbert.bham.sch.uk, www.hifield.bham.sch.uk

If you have a concern regarding your child's use of the internet at home or in school, please feel free to contact us. Our school websites have loads of advice and support to help you to keep your children safe online and include information on how to report online safety concerns. If you would like to talk to us about a concern, please come into school and ask to speak to one of our Online Safety Leads.